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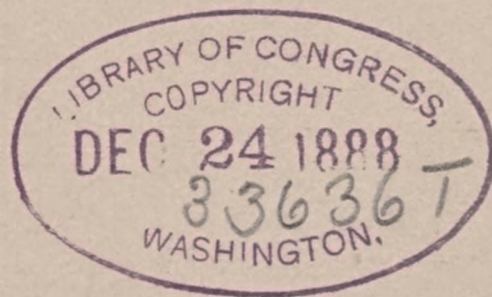
The House of Graydon.

A NOVEL.

BY W. P. NEEDHAM,

AUTHOR OF

Phantasmagorian Theology, Etc.



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To my Darlings,

CARL AND BESSIE,

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

MAY THEY ABIDE IN THE STRENGTH OF THE

HOLY PRESENCE.

W. P. N.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
NATHANIEL CHADSWORTH GRAYDON AND HIS BOOK.....	5
MINERVA AND HER DAUGHTERS.....	13
A SPINSTER OF THE OLD SCHOOL.....	26
SHALL WE EQUALIZE THE CHANCES?.....	34
AMONG THE ROSES.....	45
FAMILIAR SPIRITS.....	55
THE DEPARTURE.....	67
THE FLIGHT.....	79
IN SEARCH OF A CAB AND TWO WHITE HORSES.....	91
ALAS, FOR THE RARITY OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.....	104
THE WASP AND THE DAGGER.....	115
A REVELATION.....	124
"THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS,".....	138
"AND THE DARKNESS COMPREHENDETH IT NOT,".....	152
AN OBJECT LESSON.....	161
A TRAMP UTILIZED.....	172
LE PETITE AIMEE.....	185
HE WAS A MAN OF NERVE.....	197
A PORTRAIT UNVEILED.....	210
AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.....	224
THE MAN WITH A CORK LEG.....	231
KNOTS UNTIED.....	241
A BRIDAL TOUR.....	256
"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL,".....	265

THE HOUSE OF GRAYDON.

CHAPTER I.

NATHANIEL CHADSWORTH GRAYDON AND HIS BOOK.

Some men are positively bad, others negatively good. Of the latter class I mention Nathaniel Chadsworth Graydon, Esq., but in doing so refer to his early life, or rather to the first formations of his character, which I think the reader will conclude were happily changed prior to the commencement of this story. In early manhood, some said he was evil-minded, others that his motives were pure, notwithstanding his inability to govern his passions and hide the glaring defects of his character. As a matter of fact he was, in those days, a strange mixture of good and evil, but if his evil deeds and his good deeds had been separated, and placed on each side of the unerring scales, it is quite logical to suppose, in the light of facts, that the sweets would have outweighed the bitter, in this man's influence. But in weighing a man's character, and in estimating his worth, if you would arrive at a correct conclusion, give his *motives* due avoirdupois; charge his hereditary taints to Adam, and allow the gossip and chatter of idle tongues no place in your summary of facts. For, you understand, there is a difference, sometimes quite a difference, between character and reputation.

That coarse and cowardly people had done much to mar the happiness and destroy the aspirations of his early years was afterwards conceded by his neighbors and even his enemies. That he was brave enough to accept every situation

without flinching, and to anticipate the blessings of faith and hope, when his environments were foreboding, are well known facts. As years passed by the moral strength of this man's nature gathered force and began to assert itself. It was no longer necessary to use a microscope in discerning the preponderance of good in his character. He subdued himself, and, we have it from most respectable authority, that such a one is greater than "who taketh a city." His evil deeds were under his feet, and at forty the world had ceased finding fault. The "Miss Nancies" of society were convinced that he was an upright citizen, and the "Miss Nancies" were correct. He triumphed over his evil desires and became a good man, whereupon the world seemed to lose all interest in his welfare. Society is like a bull pup after the small boy in a sour apple tree, it barks until the fruit is safe, and scares the evil-doer into the policy of doing right, after which it leaves him alone. But society is continually barking up the wrong tree, and sometimes its only language is a bark. Nathaniel did not require the services of the bull pup, for his innate honesty and fine sense of right and wrong would have brought him to a sense of duty under any circumstances. He was one of nature's noblemen, and I think the good God, with his own hand, squeezes the lineaments of each honest man's face into proper shape. Albeit, the devil may interfere with God's designs to some extent, he can not altogether destroy or mutilate the divine architecture of an honest man's face. It is said by some well meaning and enthusiastic evolutionists that on each man's face is discernible the animal from whence he ascended—the ape, tiger, bear, serpent, or what not in the kingdom of beasts. This theory is to be accepted cautiously, for a man's face is sometimes made to glow with the ideas you have of his character—sometimes these ideas are right, sometimes wrong. If a man does some courageous and noble deed in your eyes, you can trace the lion in his face and actions; if he is guilty of some misdeed, and is beneath your

standard of respectability, you can see the serpent in his countenance; if by much and commonplace repetition he attracts your attention, you see the parrot; if by a ponderous display of vitality and jumborosity he exhibits himself, you see the elephant; if musical, you may hear the notes of the nightingale in his voice; if strong and fearless, you see the eagle soaring to its home above the clouds; if stupid, the tortoise; if fretful and cruelly pointed, the porcupine; if practical, the beaver; if industrious, the ant; if gentle, the dove; if cowardly, the hyena; if only useful, the ox or ass; if spiteful and hurtful, the spider; if sulky, the bear; if a gourmand, the hog; if noisy and troublesome, the dog; if gaudy, the peafowl; if non-committal, the hedgehog; if beautiful and airy, the butterfly; if sanguine, the mosquito; if without any natural endowments, the sheep; if not appreciated, the housefly; if permiscuous, the English sparrow; if wicked and worthless, the wasp; if stainless and pure, the lamb; and in the work of a liar and slanderer, you may trace the scratches of a vicious cat. Now, Graydon was an evolutionist of some kind; at least, he believed that "like produces like" until something happens. Whether it was his ideas of evolution or not I never knew, but from some illy-defined and misshapen purpose he began, in early life, to compile and collate the genealogy of his ancestors. It was rumored that he had his family catalogued and pedigreed as far back as Adam, and that a knight of King Arthur's Round Table, William Tell, Ossian, and many other mythical characters were considered in the list. I do not believe there was a grain of truth in the rumor, but certain it is that he had written, in a very large book, as accurately as possible, a brief mention of his ancestors, embracing, so far as it had been possible for him to obtain knowledge from various sources, a succinct sketch of their lives, and reciting many incidents connected with their history. In many instances the incidents were given without the sketch, and the ancestry of his

deceased as well as that of his living wife were mentioned at length. His work in this line had been tedious, but with painstaking perseverance he had succeeded in producing the most gratifying results, that is, gratifying to himself, for I think no one was ever interested in the matter but himself. His genealogical record was probably as accurate as the first book of Chronicles, and equally interesting, although Ezra may have been more minute in detail. On the back of this written volume was scrawled in large black letters the following title: "Book of the House of Graydon." I am not able to state the exact meaning of the title. On first reading it seems rather meaningless, but Graydon understood it, and he was the only one interested. At the time of the opening of this story Nathaniel was past seventy years of age, "living on borrowed time," as he sometimes said. Being of a scholarly disposition, and deprived of a classical education, he had, by most rigid discipline and the hardest kind of brain work, acquired a vast fund of information, which means that he had a good, old-fashioned education, and was a tolerably fair American scholar.

Corn-huskers, in any new country, must necessarily precede the scholars. The wilderness must be subdued before it can "blossom as the rose." A nation must be of ripe age before its civilization produces learned men, or before the individual has leisure to increase his brain power to its fullest capacity. Grim visaged school marms with reticules and warts, must sweep over the land as densely as did the grasshoppers over the green fields of Kansas maize; first-class school masters and good school buildings must multiply, until every cross road has an amateur college, before the influence of general education is felt, and great scholars begin to adorn the land. Graydon was a very fair specimen of the typical American scholar, living in cultured retirement, interested exclusively, almost, in the affairs of his family circle, for he had a family of great merit.

He had played two games on the matrimonial checker-board, and, being a wise man, his experience was of vast benefit in the second game.

The first partner of his joys and ills was a robust country damsel, whose maiden name was Jemima Jane Driver. Their temperaments were not congenial, but Nathaniel had learned to make the best of a bad bargain, and so endured his matrimonial afflictions until Providence interfered in his behalf and removed the gentle Jemima to that place where men and women are "neither married nor given in marriage." Five children were the result of this union, Terpsichore, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Rhadamanthus, and Hamlet. Only two, Terpsichore the eldest and Hamlet the youngest, reached the age of maturity. The others were probably christened too early in life, and could not survive the shock.

Strange as it may seem, the buxom Jemima had scarcely entered the land of shades until Nathaniel Graydon began to anticipate the joys of a second marriage. There is, about this calamity of wedlock, a fascination which he, like other men, was not able to resist. Once married, a man is always married; if otherwise, it is not his fault. Occasionally a man is married too much, but not often. If the first wife be a disaster, is it fair to presume that number two will be a still greater disaster? Certainly not. If a man's first matrimonial venture is not a success, he should keep on getting married until he has sense enough to choose a congenial partner. Nathaniel argued that life was a bore if a man is obliged to go it alone, and that a woman was as necessary in a man's home as a bottle of liniment, especially in case of sickness. So he married a second time with a vague idea that his wife would prevent rheumatism and gout, and prove to be a sweet companion; and had no idea of the great value of the prize he had won, until she revealed her character after marriage. There was a difference of some twenty years in their ages, and the gossips said that Minerva Eldridge had married her

grandfather; but the soft-eyed Minerva knew a thing or two about matrimony, which the gossips knew not. She was a modest, unassuming creature, whose entire being was saturated with a sense of her duty to her Lord, and to humanity. She accepted the plan of salvation without a murmur of dissent, and, in a quiet, Quaker-like way, sent forth an influence for good which was acknowledged throughout the community. Her soft brown hair and dark eyes, together with a graceful contour and girlish simplicity, had captured the soul of iron-bound Nathaniel, and from that hour he was a changed man. All the good that was in him came to the surface, and old things became altogether new.

In time three children came to bless them, three girls, who at the opening of this story were truly the three graces of a happy home. Minerva Graydon had no thought above the will of her God and the welfare of her children. Her love was their strength, and her wishes were to them a sweet, but inexorable law. If in serving her Lord she loved her children more, or if in loving her children she served her Lord the best, she argued not. She knew her duty and did it sweetly, quietly, and without ostentation. She was a matron of Israel, blazing a way for her children through the deep and dangerous tangles of this world to a land whose dim outlines are visible only to the eye of faith.

In book-making it is fashionable to give a lengthy and exaggerated description of each prominent character, but I shall omit this, knowing that there will be many other things, in the story, equally straining on the nervous system of the reader. By way of introduction I wish to cite the reader to a few biographical sketches taken from the perspicuous book of the "House of Graydon." Each one of the immediate family had been given a page, but none of the pages were filled; only a few entries made at odd times. On page nine hundred were the following entries:

"Terpsichore Graydon, eldest daughter of Nathaniel Chadsworth

and Jemima Jane Graydon, was born Dec. 27th, in the year of our Lord 18—. At the age of five years she is willful and somewhat selfish, much like the Drivers. * * * At the age of ten is proud, vain, and smitten easily by the opposite sex; very much like the Drivers in this respect. * * * At twenty is pretty, rather hard featured, with sandy hair inclined to curl, Roman nose, gray eyes, large hands and feet, like the Drivers. * * * At thirty is exhausting all the resources of her nature in search of a husband. * * * At thirty-five she is angular, keen visaged, talkative, and an uncompromising advocate of female suffrage. * * * At forty her hair is slightly tinged with gray, eye brows heavy, and general appearance rather masculine. Assumes the airs of a school girl and dresses accordingly. The worst is feared."

. On page nine hundred and one were entered the birth and death of little Clytemnestra. On page nine hundred and two, the birth and death of Iphigenia. On page nine hundred and three, birth and death of Rhadamanthus, poor boy. On page nine hundred and four was the following:

"Hamlet Graydon, youngest son of Nathaniel Chadsworth and Jemima Jane Graydon, was born May 1st, 18—. At five, agile and quick to learn. * * * At ten, black-eyed, black curly hair, strong in his passions and affections. Is in many respects like his ancestor, Oliver Cromwell Graydon. (See page 502.) * * * At twelve, shows the effects of evil associations and has some of the characteristics of the Drivers."

Right here the entries on Hamlet's sketch ended and a lead pencil cross had been drawn over it, indicating a sudden end of the young man's biographical career.

On page nine hundred and five began a history of the ancestry of Mrs. Minerva Graydon, which continued to page nine hundred and forty. On page nine hundred and forty was the following:

"Aglaia, eldest daughter of Nathaniel Chadsworth and Minerva Graydon, born June 20th, 18—. At ten she has lustrous black eyes and magnificent black, wavy hair; soft of speech and quite timid, but has a fiery disposition when aroused or imposed upon. * * * At twenty, dreamy, tender-hearted and beloved by all. She is very beautiful but rather reserved and has none of the spiteful ways and

forcible characteristics usually accorded to black-eyed and black-haired persons, unless these qualities are latent; is inclined to write poetry, and is in many ways like her grandmother, Elizabeth Barrett Browning Eldridge."

On page nine hundred and forty-one the following entries had been made, to-wit:

"Thalia, second daughter of Nathaniel Chadsworth and Minerva Graydon, born Jan. 2nd, 18—. At the age of ten is a great favorite among the young people; brown hair and eyes; eyes much darker than hair; is quite attractive. * * * At fifteen, is much attached to her mother, spiritually minded, and passionately fond of beautiful paintings and the scenery of Nature; is very much like her mother and her great, great grandmother, Rose Elizabeth Graydon. (See page 712.)"

The next page, nine hundred and forty-two, contained the following mention of the youngest daughter:

"Euphrosyne, youngest daughter of Nathaniel Chadsworth and Minerva Graydon, was born September 12th, 18—. At five she was acknowledged the most bewitchingly beautiful child in the neighborhood. * * * At ten an Italian artist, attracted by her Circassian style of beauty, painted her portrait, by permission, and it is now in his studio at Rome, admired by all who gaze upon it. He has refused an offer of five hundred dollars for the picture. * * * At sixteen—how is it possible for an old man like me to describe her? She is as radiant as an angel and as charming and graceful as a queen. Her hair is the most wonderful part about her; very long, abundant, soft as the silken hair of the goats of Kedar, and in color lighter than flax. She wears it school-girl fashion sometimes, and when loose it falls around her in graceful profusion to her hips. Her eyes are as blue as the skies 'that bend above her,' and the bloom of health reddens her cheeks. Thanks to the careful training of a wise mother, she is neither spoiled nor proud of her great beauty and the constant attention of her friends. Flattery does not seem to affect her, and she is just as pure as she is beautiful. She is devotedly attached to her piano and gives promise of becoming a fine musician. In spirit she is like her mother and her great grandmother, Beatrice Graydon. (See page 804.)"

The reader will pardon the extravagance of the recital of Euphrosyne's charms. He was an old man and she was his favorite child.

At the time of which I speak Euphrosyne was seventeen years of age and past; Thalia was twenty, and Aglaia twenty-two. Terpsichore's age was uncertain, or rather I am persuaded to withhold any information I may have in regard to it, for it is a matter in which the general public are not interested. Her mission in the world is to get married, and I might, even at this late date, spoil some of her schemes for entrapping a husband. I never learned Minerva's age, but it was probably forty or forty-five at the opening of this story.

CHAPTER II.

MINERVA AND HER DAUGHTERS.

In the perusal of some of the foregoing remarks you may have been led to the conclusion that Graydon was, in personal appearance, aged and decrepit. I hasten to correct this impression, if such exists, for, although it is true that he was past seventy, yet his "eye was not dim nor his natural forces abated." In order that the reader become better acquainted with him and the gentle Minerva, I will introduce them on a bright, crisp, winter's night, as they converse together before retiring, and while they are awaiting the return of the girls from their Unity Club lecture, in progress at the opera house. All were in attendance at the lecture except Terp, who suffered with neuralgia up stairs.

The old man occupied an easy chair, and had been reading from the "Book of the House of Graydon," and commenting on some of the lives and characters therein mentioned. Now, take your photograph of him as he sits there so quietly. Hair on a man's face gives him an untidy and goat-like appearance; therefore, Nathaniel's firm set jaws

were cleanly shaven, for he was a man of orderly habits, and believed that his personal appearance should always be in keeping with that of his family, the members of which were models of neatness. A heavy moustache and eyebrows of gray contrasted becomingly with his dark red face. His loose flowing gown, on this occasion, fell gracefully around him, and every article of clothing, including his stiff linen collar and tie, were just as becoming and appropriate as any gentleman's clothing should be, and faultlessly clean. His sleek iron-gray hair and black piercing eyes, shaded by their heavy brows, gave great strength to his countenance. Now, when a man stands erect and you notice that his shoulders are square, and that he is not bow-legged nor warped in the chest, and that he walks in a very graceful manner with an obvious desire to get there as soon as any one, you say at once, "he has a military bearing." So you would have said of Nathaniel Graydon. Whether he was cleaning his pigsties or his cow stables, which he sometimes did; or whether he was delivering a lecture to an intelligent audience, which he sometimes did; or whether he was at home in the deep enjoyment of his family circle, which of late was a growing habit; or whether he was abroad in the society of other men of the world, which was frequently the case, he always wore the same commanding, or military, aspect. There was no half-way station between his "Yes" and his "No." When he said "Yes," his neighbors did not understand him to mean "No." When he said "No," it was never understood as an affirmative. He was quick to take offense and strike back, but, like the true soldier, just as ready to forgive. I speak of his standing in the community in which he lived. In his family he was neither harsh nor firm, but a sweet-tempered gentleman of refinement. He lived a dual life, presenting to the world his rough exterior and to his family his refined interior. It is true that he had enemies, but it is equally true that he had a host of warm friends. I would speak further

of his characteristics, but I know you are anxious to become acquainted with him and learn what was said on the crisp winter evening.

“My dear Minerva, it is quite proper that you, like the mother of the Gracchi, should point to your children as your jewels, and, like Israel’s pillar of fire, be their guide when the way is dark and the road rough to their untried feet; but, sweet wife, are not your household burdens sometimes too heavy? Do you not often grow weary in performing duties which should be left for other hands?” The old man spoke not imperatively, nor as one having authority, but softly and sweetly as a woman.

“There was a woman of the tribe of Levi,” said Minerva, “who by her faithfulness and motherly love saved the life of her babe, and gave to coming ages the illustrious law-giver of Israel, and made it possible for Miriam to give to the world the riches of her wisdom. Dost think the woman of the tribe of Levi received a small compensation? Nay, my husband, mine is a labor of love and brings no fatigue. Love is life. Hate is death. In a true mother’s love there is liberty, and life, and strength; its exercise brings repose and sweet tranquility to soul and body. In loving our children we serve the Lord, and you remember the precious words of the prophet: ‘They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.’”

“Exactly, exactly, you are always right, Minerva,” said this enthusiastic old gentleman; “so altogether different from Jemima Jane, of whom I have just been reading in the ‘Book of the House of Graydon.’ The characters of our three daughters are beautiful and symmetrical; they were as clay in your hands, and who knows but what the world may be benefited by their genius. Euphrosyne is undoubtedly one of the greatest musicians in the west.”

“Nathaniel,” said Minerva, “thee must recollect that Frossie is just beginning to learn music.”

“Quite right, my dear Minerva,” replied the old man; “but she is nevertheless a great musician, only she needs to be developed.”

“Remember always,” said Minerva, who was somewhat amused at her husband’s enthusiastic ideas, “that with thee I entertain a high regard for our daughters’ welfare and future success.”

“Yes, wife, I am aware of it,” musingly, “and there is our gentle but impassioned Thalia, who is so fondly attached to you, and seems never to tire of your caresses. I am proud of her, for she is one of the greatest painters in this country.”

“Nathaniel,” cried Minerva, “thee forgets that our Thalia is just beginning to paint.”

“Exactly, exactly,” said the old man; “she is a great painter just the same, only not developed. And there is Aglaia, she is one of the most graceful and versatile writers of prose and verse in the west.”

“My dear,” said the soft voice, “dost remember that Aggie has written but one accepted contribution, the poem entitled ‘November,’ published in the ‘Commercial Enterprise?’”

“Correct again,” softly said the old man, “but she only needs development.”

“And there is Terpsichore,” he continued, after a short pause. “Poor Terp, she is somewhat of a catastrophe, yet succeeds quite well in some of her chosen duties; but she is a thoroughbred Driver, and the Drivers, as far back as I have been able to trace them, were all wrong, up stairs. Her mother, my lamented partner, Jemima Jane, was convinced that cayenne was good for all the ills that flesh is heir to, and she sprinkled my underclothes with it until I would sometimes be but little better than a perambulating blister; there was cayenne in the drinking water, cayenne in the bath tub, cayenne in the toast, on the meats, and in every article of food. You may well suppose that she made it hot for me. Terp’s great uncle, Smith Driver, or ‘Old Smithereens,’ as

the boys called him, was immensely wealthy, but was fanatically certain that himself and family would be driven to starvation and perhaps the county asylum for the poor. He lived as parsimoniously as a beggar. Amanda Driver, a grandmother along the line somewhere, was one of those cranky Millerites who prepared for an ascension to heaven, and on the morning fixed for the blowing of Gabriel's trumpet, put on her ascension robe, which was simply her best night-gown, trimmed in black velvet, with a red sash around the waist. The fool jumped off the barn and broke her leg, and was a cripple during the rest of her life. One of her great-grandfathers, away back, commenced the publication of a newspaper, and tried to make money by publishing advanced ideas about religion and politics. One of her grand aunts joined the Oneida community, and one joined the Church of Latter-day Saints and wandered off with the Mormons, was sealed to a long-haired beast, and became a small fraction of a wife. Yes, the Drivers were all coarse-meated, noisy 'What-is-its,' and I am sorry to say that Terpsichore is altogether a Driver. Recently she has been courting the Presbyterian minister, who, you know, is an old bachelor without matrimonial aspirations. The results are amazingly terrific. The members of the congregation were aware of her designs and the pastor was not, but, notwithstanding, a miniature scandal began to brew and bubble. Terp, being advised of this, wrote him a note, telling him of her affection and that the gossips were busy with their names. The poor fellow was completely prostrated, as much so as if he had been struck by lightning. I learned to-day that he has resigned and left town. I know that it is my duty to talk to her, but she is so much like the Drivers that good advice would be wasted. Oh, how I despise her mincing ways and affected airs! Yesterday I saw her with a school-girl hat stuck on top of her head, with her little dapple gray curls flying around her face, and her head looking like a hurrah's perch. I am sorry I did

not have the courage to speak to her then, but she no longer cares for my advice, or, seemingly, for my friendship. Sophocles says: 'He that throws a faithful friend away, I count as bad as if he threw his life away;' so I regard Terpsichore, for I would be her friend, be glad to advise her, but she declines to receive instruction or aid from me, and I can scarcely speak to her about her conduct without becoming angry."

"Is it well for thee," said the gentle voice, "to speak ill of thine own? She is thine own flesh and blood, and it is the will of God that thy love should be about her. Children, whatever may be their faults, are entitled to the warmth of parental affection, for they are blessings from heaven. If I were childless I would be as unhappy as Hannah of old, who, being without offspring, went down to Shiloh in great agony of soul, and prayed that God would give her a child. Pleading for something upon which to bestow a mother's love, willing to risk the pangs and dangers of child-birth, that she might perform the highest and holiest duty of womanhood, that of moulding and shaping the destiny of a human soul — of training a child in the fear of the Lord."

"Sweet Minerva," in tones that were wonderfully soft and musical, "I can but reply in the words of Solomon, 'Thy lips, oh my spouse, drop as the honey comb; honey and milk are under thy tongue.'"

"Peace be with thee, my noble husband," she said, with a flush of pleasure. "Thy soul will lead thee aright, and thou art to me like the great Hector, to whom his faithful wife said, 'Thou art my father, my brother, and blooming husband.' Often have I thought to speak of your absent son Hamlet and ——."

"Damnation," cried Nathaniel, with his society accent, "Why should his name be forever linked with my family? He is a Driver! a scoundrel! an ingrate! an outcast! curse him!"

He had arisen and was walking excitedly around the room. Minerva, being thoroughly alarmed and greatly distressed, arose quietly and came quickly to his side.

“Nathaniel,” she said softly and tenderly.

Instantly he was out of society and safe at home. “Pardon me,” he said, and blushed like a school girl.

“If it gives thee pain, I will not speak of him,” she continued; “but he is bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh. I am sure he had many of the best qualities of the Graydons, so I have heard, and that in personal appearance he resembles his father. Even though he possess some of the bad qualities of the Drivers, remember that he is thine. Forgive him, oh, husband, and take him to thy heart again. Let the prodigal return to the home of his youth.”

“I am willing to concede that, as a boy, he had many excellent qualities,” he said musingly. “That was long ago; he is now a man, and I haven’t heard from him in years. He has talent, but I will not forgive him. He might have made a good and useful citizen, and perhaps he is such. I hope he is, but—” looking cautiously around the room and dropping his voice to a whisper, “damn the Drivers.”

Minerva quietly resumed her sewing and he fell into a profound reverie, which was, by and by, interrupted by the entrance of the girls, who had laid aside their wraps in an adjoining room and were now ready to bid their parents “good night” before retiring to rest upstairs.

“Oh, papa!” cried the bounding Frossie, planting a robust kiss on the old man’s cheek, “we had such a delightful lecture; he told us all about molecules, and the mode of motion, and ever so many nice things. And how everybody did stare and stare at my new sealskin sacque.”

“Oh, mamma!” said the affectionate Thalia, twining her arms around her mother in a fond embrace, “sister is mistaken; it was not her sealskin sacque but herself that attracted admiring glances. The frost-bitten beauties of the seal can

not be compared to the warmth and wealth of Frossie's charms."

"You are quite right, Thalia," ventured the far-away and dreamy Aggie. "Half the young men in town are in love with Frossie, and it's no wonder. The young man who would fail to fall head over heels in love with her at first sight would indeed be a dull fellow. If I was a boy I'd marry Frossie myself."

"Of course I'd have you," chirruped Frossie, "but you would have to ask papa and mamma about it."

"Ah, there is, or will be, the rub," said Nathaniel, rather seriously. "I will never be able to find suitable husbands for my girls; that is, I will always think them too good for common mortals. One philosopher said: 'The voice should be written on the forehead, for according as a man's character is he shows it in his eyes.' He was correct, but alas, my daughters, how few characters are voiced truly and correctly to the ears of happy lovers. A man's character is clearly defined after marriage, but before the knot is tied there is a studied effort to conceal the weak points and to bring out the virtues in bold relief. The good and ill of wedded bliss are wrapped up in the characters of husband and wife."

"Dear papa," said Frossie, gaily, "do not trouble yourself about us girls. When we are married, you will agree with us that our lovers are fine fellows. But why talk about such gloomy things. Let's have a little music before going to bed," and Frossie tripped airily to a piano, and would have filled the room with music, but her mother softly interposed:

"Hast forgotten that Terpsichore is ill to-night? Thy music might disturb her."

"Poor Terp," said Frossie, resignedly seating herself again; "I pity her when she suffers with that dreadful neuralgia, but she is so cross that I sometimes almost hate her; she makes fun of my music, too. Only yesterday I was in the parlor playing the piano and singing as well as I knew how,

when all at once the door flew open and Terp's tousled head poked in. 'Is that you, Frossie?' said she. 'Yes,' said I. 'What are you doing?' said she. 'What am I doing?' said I; 'why, I am singing and playing on the piano.' 'Oh,' said she, 'I thought it was papa taking snuff.' "

"And one day she came to my studio," said Thalia, "just to find fault. She walked up to the canvas upon which was represented a toad sitting serenely under a mushroom. 'What is it?' she said. 'It's a toad,' said I; 'be careful, or it will bite you.' Next she went to my water-lily, which all the girls say is just splendid. 'What is this?' said she. I told her it was a water-lily. 'I wouldn't have believed it,' said she. Then she went to the large canvas on which I spent so many long days in painting the angel you admire so, mamma, and, standing bolt upright before the picture, she said, 'And this: what is this?' These words made me angry, and I said, 'Bless your old eyes, that's an angel.' After looking at the picture very carefully again, she held up her hands and said, 'Is it possible? Why, Thalia, you should put a label on it.' 'No,' said I, 'I'll not put a label on my angels, but the next one I paint I'll fix it up with trousers and a moustache; then, I'm sure, you will appreciate it.' "

"Terp paid me her compliments a few days ago," said Aggie, "and I assure you I have cause to remember her. She came to me while I was lying on a sofa in the parlor trying to find a suitable word to rhyme with 'star.' Seating herself at my side she said, 'Are you composing a poem?' 'Yes, Terp,' said I, 'that's just what I am doing.' 'I thought so,' said she, 'judging from your personal appearance. Now, Aggie, I would advise you to quit trying to write, and will tell you a story which may bring you to a sense of your duty. Once upon a time ancient Egypt was overrun with poets, so much so that the crops were a failure for want of attention. One of the shepherd kings of that country began to cast about him for some plan to bring about a reform, and rid the

commonwealth of the pests. By the advice of his counselors he offered a reward of ten dollars a perch for the longest poem anybody could write, and set apart a day for receiving the poets, which was to be a general convention of rhymsters. The day arrived and with it came before the king an innumerable army of poets. Early in the morning the king went to the back door of his palace, and as far as the eye could reach were the mighty hosts of wild-eyed women and men, with great bundles of manuscript; some were weary and had fallen asleep on the top of their bundles; some had their poems strapped to the backs of camels, and some were standing guard over their bundles with implements of war in their hands. Each one endeavored to make his bundle appear larger than that of his neighbor. The king went to the front door—and such a sight; for several miles in front poets were piled up on top of each other, two or three deep. In the great forest beyond the trees were laden with them, and on the great mountains afar he could see them to the snow line, and many of them were waving prodigious bundles to attract his attention. Just then a slave entered and told him that the roof of the palace had given way on account of being overstrained by the weight of poets and their bundles. Another slave came and told him that the cellar and basement were overcrowded, and that the outside of the palace, to the fifth story, was lined with poets, who were clinging to lightning rods, window sills, and anything and everything they could grasp. Now the king waxed angry, and in his sore displeasure asked the slave what was the cause of the noise and babel of voices, that shook the foundations of the palace; and the slave told him that the poets were all reciting ‘rejected’ poems to each other; and the king said, ‘go to’ and bring the life-guard. The soldiers of the crown soon restored order among the *Literati*, and the king said, ‘let each one bring his poem, and lay it before me, without reading, or breaking the seal,’ and it was done as he said. A great heap was made of the

poems; and the pile was so great that it reached to the clouds, and the circumference thereof was like that of a walled city. There were in the pile, seventeen thousand poems on 'Life;' seventeen thousand on 'Death;' ten thousand on 'Spring;' ten thousand on 'Summer;' ten thousand 'Autumn Soliloquies;' five thousand 'Odes to Winter;' twenty thousand poems on 'September;' twenty thousand on 'October;' thirty thousand on 'Other Days.' There were several thousand war poems of historical merit, which were carried by elephants and dumped as a foundation for the pile. The balance of the heap was made up of poems on various other subjects, such as 'Dawn;' 'Sunset;' 'The ring she used to wear;' 'Only a bunch of hair;' 'Alone;' 'I think of only thee;' 'My heart, my heart is breaking.' The majority of the poems were freighted with sighs, and heart-aches, and groans, and tears, and stars, and buds, and mellow moons, and garlands of flowers. So you must know they were very sweet. At a given signal the heap was set on fire, and the flames of genius smote the bright Egyptian skies before the eager-eyed poets were aware of the treachery of their king. Great lamentation filled the air, and there were sounds of distress, and a gnashing of teeth. For four days and nights the conflagration continued; the air was burdened with sweet smells; the leaves of the trees in the great forest were covered with honey, that fell from the atmosphere, and the earth caught the nectar, that fell as rain, and formed into pools and running streams. The king now issued an edict, which said, 'Henceforth any man or woman, in my kingdom, who writes poetry, shall be placed in a dungeon, and be compelled to live apart from his fellows.' To his great surprise, this pleased them, and they called him a great and gracious sovereign, for they said a dungeon was just the place for them, and that no one could write poetry unless he was lonesome and sad; and the darker the dungeon, the better the poetry would be. Notwithstanding the king's amazement, he was crafty, and being determined

to establish prosperity in his kingdom once more, conceived a horrible plan to rid himself of the bards. 'I know of a tropical island,' he said, 'whose shores are washed by the crystalline waves of a summer sea. It is covered with beautiful mauze and mango trees, and lotus blooms are abundant. I will take you to that beautiful land, in consideration of your loyalty, and lofty genius. There you may dwell for a season, and your meat shall be broiled humming-birds and stewed nightingales.' The poets were highly pleased, and all of them began to write stanzas in honor of the king. Many could write sixty stanzas an hour, without damage to their mental faculties. The king hastily lashed a number of large vessels together, and the poets entered them with exceeding great joy. They sailed into a deep sea, out of sight of the land, and the wicked sailors, by order of the king, bored great holes in the bottoms of the vessels, and made their escape in the only life-boats. The vessels sank, and all on board were drowned. The last poet seen was an angular female, who clung to the mast, and recited, as the cold waves closed about her, a poem she had just composed, called "The great Hereafter." After this the valley of the Nile become productive and peace and plenty filled the land.' This was Terp's story, and it is n't true, is it, papa? Oh, she is so hateful and disagreeable."

"Daughters," said Minerva, smiling in spite of herself, "thee must bear with thy sister and speak no ill of her. Pray as did the psalmist: 'Set a watch, Oh Lord, before my mouth, and keep the doors of my lips.' If thou canst think of nothing good of her, then keep thy tongues from speaking evil. There is no life entirely blameless, and none altogether evil. Speak only of her good deeds, and leave her sins and weaknesses alone."

"It's all the same to Terp whether you speak good or ill of her," said Nathaniel. "But your mother is right; speak well of her, and remember she is a Driver. Hesiod said:

‘The best treasure among men is a frugal tongue,’ therefore, my daughters, be careful.”

“The hour is late,” observed Minerva, “and my daughters need rest and sleep, therefore it is time to say ‘Good night.’ Frossie, bind thy hair securely to-night, so that it will not trouble thee so much in the morning. Aggie, thy face looks white and pinched; lay aside thy corset for a few days, and see if the blood will not come to thy cheeks again. Thalia, thy hands and feet are cold, and thee must wear thy heaviest flannels and long woolen stockings to-morrow.”

“Good night, papa,” cried Frossie, giving him first, and afterwards her mamma, each an emphatic kiss.

“Good night, mamma,” cried Thalia, giving Minerva first and her papa next, each an emphatic kiss.

“Good night,” said Aggie, kissing her parents warmly without addressing either.

Such was the custom of this family on retiring, and there was another custom which developed right here. The girls passed into the hallway leading to their upstairs sleeping apartments; the door was closed for a moment, and then reopened and Frossie’s bright head was thrust into the room again.

“Good night, papa,” she said, throwing him a kiss with her hand.

“Good night, my darling,” said the old man, returning the kiss. Then the door closed, but only for a moment, when the hazel-haired Thalia reappeared.

“Good night, mamma,” she cried, throwing a kiss, which was given back with a graceful wave of Minerva’s hand.

And so the girls went to bed.

CHAPTER III.

A SPINSTER OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

Terpsichore Graydon's serene certitude of mind and speech, together with a keen sense of irony, when in her normal condition, were wonderful, and made her something of a terror to her immediate associates. She endeavored, like her father, to live a double life, but with different aims and results. At home she endeavored to make herself disagreeable, with colossal success; in society she endeavored to appear as an amiable and most exemplary young lady, with disastrous results. The numerosity of her ideas, her euphuistic ways, coupled with the great length and breadth of her conversational ability, made her, on all occasions, an absorbing element of social life, and a target for criticism. In her religious views she was quite practical, and regarded immortality as a mathematical problem readily solved, but tiresome to contemplate. It was a great mystery to her that people should weep when their souls were converted, and the plan of salvation was a divine scheme to worry weak-minded sinners about things for which they were not accountable nor able to change. There were, no doubt, many good and beautiful things in the world which she appreciated, but there was *one* good thing above all other good things which, like a will-o'-the-wisp, kept a distance in front, but always out of reach; pursue it as determinedly as she could, and still it would elude her grasp; chase it as swiftly as she might, and it was not overtaken; this delusive and illusive good thing was a husband. That she had failed in many, very many, instances to secure the object of her affections—if she had any affections,—did not abate her zeal and enthusiasm in the quest. In early years she had some preference as to what a husband should be; what he should look like, and what his financial and moral standing should be; but of late years she had become less

exacting. Her ideal husband was first rich, then poor, and finally it was not a matter of consequence; he was at first blue-eyed and light-haired, then black-eyed, with a like color of hair; he had small hands and small feet for a long time, but finally she settled on red hair and big feet, but all to no purpose. Her ideals being completely shattered, she cared not whether her future lord had red, brown, black, or light hair, or whether he was bald-headed or not; the eyes were next of no account, and she admitted that one with a glass eye, wooden legs, and only one arm was better than none, her only requirement being that he be of the masculine gender. Her acquaintances were all aware of her weakness in this direction, and she was the subject of many a neighborhood scandal and ripe fruit for the gossips. Among other things, it was said that she consulted a dream-book each morning, with a view to obtaining a husband, and that she was a sure and anxious customer of the Gypsy fortune-tellers who happened to stroll by the town. Away back in the front part of her existence, when but seventeen, she procured, at great expense, from one of these shrivelled Sibyls a "Love potion," or rather a prescription for one, which the Gypsy told her would work to perfection. It read as follows:

"If you wish to procure a husband, prepare and administer the following, according to directions: Place a screen wire bird trap under a lilac bush, and, after baiting properly, cover it over with honeysuckles and lilies, leaving only a small aperture for entrance. This must be done when the moon is shining brightly, and in perfect silence. Then walk backwards three times around the trap and bush, repeating softly these lines:

When the blooms are blowing
On a summer day,
And the hours are flowing
Like a dream away;
When the south winds hover,
Nestle by my side;
Oh, my happy lover
Take me for a bride.

If at high noon on the following day the trap contains exactly fourteen English sparrows, proceed at once to put them to death by some slow and painful method. It is absolutely necessary that the birds be tortured in order to secure the favor of the gods. No part of the bird should be used, in the preparation of this potion, except the liver. Cut out the livers carefully, and place them in a porcelain kettle together with three white rosebuds, two white lilies, four snow-drops, a tulip, a forget-me-not, a veronica blossom, and a gill of rose-water. Take this combination to some sequestered spot at night (the night must be very dark, if during a storm all the better), being careful to select the most lonely and abandoned place available—an uninhabited cave would be a proper place. Then the pot should be allowed to simmer over a sandal-wood fire for two hours, and, when the bell in the tower of the Cathedral tolls the hour of midnight, the mixture should begin to boil. When it has boiled exactly twenty-two minutes and fourteen seconds, pour into a pint bottle, which fill up with elderberry wine. Cork tightly, place in a cool place, and it will keep an indefinite length of time. If the object of your affection be a young man twenty drops will be sufficient; if an old man, give him a teaspoonful; if an old bachelor with a bald spot on the top of his head, trap more sparrows, boil their livers in rose-water, and add as much as, in your judgment, will suit the case. Administer when the sign is in the lion."

Now, I do not here assert that Terpsichore prepared this potion, but I have it from good authority that she made the trap. I suppose that her inability to secure the requisite number of English sparrows damaged and ruined the enterprise. At least, I am told that there were never more than five birds in the trap at any time, but, be it placed to her credit, she tortured all that came into her hands, according to prescription. Aside from the matrimonial instinct that was so overwhelmingly apparent, she had other traits of character which will be revealed, to some extent, in this narrative. Among other things she was a constitutional liar. Like many fluent conversationalists she preferred to use falsehood occasionally, in order to make herself conspicuous, and she was a dear lover of sensation. When she chose she could be as sarcastic as the claws of a turtle, or as cynical as a porcupine

in full bloom. The minor traits of her character were, however, overshadowed and almost obscured by her obvious and energetic endeavors to enter the holy bonds of wedlock. The main groove of her being—the channel of her existence, as it were—centered towards the altars of Hymen. Strange as it may seem she had never received a marriage proposal up to this time, although she had been involved in several scandalous entanglements of her own manufacture, and would have everybody believe that she had rejected a score of suitors. These facts made no difference to her, and as time went by the bolder and more aggressive became her maneuvers; the mere fact that she was growing old made her foolishly desperate to enter the bonds of wedlock. It flashed across her mind one day that the facilities for getting married were not equally shared by the sexes, therefore, something was wrong. This thought grew upon her and she resolved to seek redress in the lecture field. She prepared a lengthy address, which she called “Social Reform, or Shall we Equalize the Chances?” Want of leisure and space makes it impossible for me to give the reader all of this lecture, but I will recite a few brief extracts to show you the general drift of her mind and soul, follow me:

“Ladies and gentlemen: Since Eve discovered that she was naked, and God made Adam her sovereign lord and ruler, woman has been the slave of man; a willing slave, bound hand and foot, ever hugging the chains and refusing to be released. She enjoys her servitude and dependence. Whether it be right for her to rejoice in her condition I shall not argue in this lecture. Man and woman were created equal, with a small difference as to ribs. The object of the first man was to secure the first woman, and the object of the first woman was to secure the first man, for, was not the sweet will of the woman stronger than the command of God? And did not Adam turn his back upon God and the angels to please a woman? There can be no genuine happiness to a woman in this world without a husband. The maidens of Israel deemed it a disgrace to die childless, and Rachel once cried out in great agony, ‘Give me children, or I die. The torch of Hymen should guide the young men and maidens, and,

also, the old men and old women, provided they are not married. It is a matter of no consequence what business you pursue, if you would make a success of it you must be married. Sarah laughed when the angel of the Lord told her she would bear a child. She laughed in derision, for she was ninety years of age, and was, probably, a woman who did not believe everything she heard. But the angel was right, therefore, should anyone be discouraged on account of age? I answer No. Rachel and tender-eyed Leah were the great fountain of all the forces of Israel, yet Jacob made himself a slave and toiled fourteen long years to secure them, which proves that much hard work is sometimes required before we can get the one just suited to our mind, but the result of such labor is remunerative.

One of the most beautiful characters in the bible is that of faithful Ruth, who refused to leave the widowed Naomi, and endured poverty and hardships with heroic patience. Was this loving Moabitess blind to the excellencies of matrimony? Oh, no! While I do not admire the spirit that caused her to lie down at the feet of Boaz in an out-building at night, and him intoxicated at the time, yet I can but admire her enthusiasm. Yes, my friends, enthusiasm is what is needed to secure a husband, and this enthusiasm must be coupled with a more liberal and independent view of our social relations. Will you please, for a moment, look at this matter in its true light and divest it of all sentiment? Marriage is a business transaction, in which the best interests of two human beings are united. Is it of more importance to one than the other? Certainly not. Is man by nature better fitted and worthier to enter the bonds of wedlock than woman? Certainly not. Is earthly bliss of more consequence to one than to the other? If not, why is it that the man is allowed to ask the plighted troth of the woman he loves, and the woman is not allowed the same privilege with the masculine gender? Why is it that the man is granted permission to ask the woman to be his wife, and the woman must not ask the man to be her husband? It is only a custom, and a weak sentiment that upholds it. A woman has the same interest at stake, therefore she has the same rights in the matter. Many a lover is too faint-hearted to ask the necessary question. In such a case why should not the woman have the privilege to come to his rescue by making the proposition herself? It would save time and fuel (laughter, in her mind). Many a man who should become a husband is left out in the cold, because he will not speak. Many a woman is served likewise because she dare not speak. In consequence, the number of bachelors and spinsters is alarmingly on the

increase. Sisters, let us assert our independence ; let us show to the world that the matrimonial relation is one which both sexes may approach with equal propriety. Remember the good book says, 'Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' So I say to you, come up and live in a higher atmosphere (great applause, in her mind). * * * * *

Among the ancient Greeks and Jews marriage was considered so honorable and necessary that anyone who failed to secure a husband, or a wife, as the case might be, was branded as a criminal against society and against the nation. So such a one is to-day, for it is the plain duty of every man and woman to get married. Saint Paul clearly teaches us our duty in this respect, and we could not do better than to follow his advice. My hearers, I sometimes shudder to think of the dangers to which myself and all women are exposed. But I am horrified beyond my power to express, when I see how readily and willingly the young ladies of my acquaintance yield themselves to the masculine embrace. What is the result of this promiscuous, everlasting, never-ending courtship, where the man is allowed to trifle at will with the affections of the woman, allowing her hopes and desires to reach their height and then coldly withdrawing for some more attractive creature ? I tell you, it is productive of bad results. It fills society with libertines and bad women. Many a warm-hearted, impulsive girl becomes a faithless, godless woman, because her best and brightest hopes were blighted by the one who should have held her worthy of all respect and love. You remember the story of Leah's daughter, the beautiful damsel Dinah, who was beguiled by the fascinating Hivite youth, and also, the bloody and terrible revenge taken by the sons of Jacob, who temporarily disabled the male subjects of Hamor and then destroyed them. Horrible as it was, I can but admire the manly words of Simeon and Levi, who, when reproved because of their folly and wickedness, after the massacre, simply said : 'Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot ?' Now the Hivite youth wanted to marry Dinah, and she loved him very dearly, but the old folks objected, with the usual results. When young folks desire to enter the state of matrimony, it is best to allow them to do so. Intervention on the part of parents is sure to prove disastrous, for youth and age cannot agree in this matter. In youth we marry for sweet love's sake ; when the years of responsibility arrive we are wiser and do not allow love to dictate. In youth we see the roses, the tinsel, the glamour of life ; in later years we know only its harsh realities. Youth is the June, age the

December of life. (Great applause, and cries of 'good'—in her mind.) Sensible men and women get married; if it were not so what would become of our free institutions? The tide of civilization would recede if this glorious institution was abolished. There is only one civilized place where men are 'neither married nor given in marriage,' and the environments are not the same there as here. Therefore, connubial bliss is above all other considerations in this mundane sphere. Those who have testified in regard to its merits, speak well of it. It is like the personal experience given at church class-meetings—much the same all the year round. If a man has n't sense enough to get married it is his own fault, and I am here to-night to say if a woman fails to get married it is *her* fault. (Symptoms in the audience, in her mind.) Shall we equalize the chances? That's the question for consideration. My dear sisters, if we do not it's our own fault. We have it in our power to break down this silly custom, of waiting for the men to propose. It is a preposterous sentiment, and bars the way of one-half of the female portion of society. It is an obstruction that should be removed, and if we put our shoulders to the wheel and all push as one man victory will be ours. The day is coming—is almost here, when this question will be divested of all false modesty and woman will be free to act as she pleases. When that day arrives you will find her no less modest and womanly than in her present state, and my highest ambition is to be a recognized factor in this great social reform. My days shall be spent in earnest effort to equalize the chances." (Here a shower of bouquets falls around her, amidst deafening applause—all in her mind.)

Terp's lecture was quite lengthy, but the above brief extracts will be sufficient to show the reader its general tenor. She actually labored under the impression that she was a pioneer advocate in a great social reform. If one's imagination was strong enough to make him believe that he had a boil on the back of his neck, he would suffer all the pangs and penalties of a boil, and, though it be not visible to any one, you could not convince him there was no boil there. This eccentric female was sure she had made a discovery in social ethics that would eventually revolutionize the regulation way of "popping the question." But she had another and a far more selfish motive in thus offering herself as a sacrifice; she thought it would, at least equalize her own chances in

procuring the long sought for boon — a man — one she could call her own. It is one thing to enter the lecture field, and quite another to get an audience. So Terp found it to be. The different organizations of the place were duly notified of her intentions, and she intimated to the ladies of the Baptist church that she was willing to give her lecture, under their auspices, for the benefit of the chattel mortgage fund of that institution. Much to her surprise she found the social thermometer down to zero, and her proposition was received with an icy refusal to accept. Next she tried the Methodists, but the ladies of that organization told her that the chances were already equalized, and that it would be a cold day when *they* needed any advice about match-making, or matrimony, in any of its various branches. The Presbyterians declined her proposition, and told her they were otherwise engaged. Other religious denominations and organizations were applied to in vain. Poor Terp! must she abandon her dreams of reform, or appear on the rostrum without being called out by the people, as she wanted it to appear? At last, happy thought, she would make a “starring tour” through the country, visiting the small villages first, and then, if her success was satisfactory, and she had no doubt but that it would be, she would bill herself for larger towns and cities. By a strategic effort she secured the privilege of lecturing in the Unitarian Chapel in the very small town of B——, about seventy-five miles from home. There was not, of course, a newspaper printed in B——, and no hand bills were used, but the lecture was thoroughly advertised by the ladies sewing circle — a much better dispenser of news than would have been a newspaper. Here was fame edging up toward her, and what would she do with it when it was fairly in her possession? Would she be excessively vain and pompous when the people looked upon her as a great leader of a still greater reform? These were questions which she considered at length.

CHAPTER IV.

SHALL WE EQUALIZE THE CHANCES?

Terp prepared a suit of clothing especially for the occasion of her first appearance on the rostrum at a great expense of time and money. It consisted of—Oh! horror of horrors!—a pair of broadcloth pantaloons, and nearly all the paraphernalia of a gentleman's outfit. A loose cloth gown, or coat, the upper part of which was adjusted much like the "button-up-in-front coats" sometimes used by the clergy, fell gracefully about her till it reached to her knees and there stopped. A plain white collar and tie, a stiff hat, and soft kid shoes completed her make up. She did not, of course, appear on the street in this costume—it being her stage dress, or suit, to be used to give full force and effect to her words.

I am sorry to say that her lecture was a dismal failure, or, rather, that she had no chance to deliver it on account of the absence of her audience. On the evening of her proposed lecture in B—— she arrived at the chapel exactly at seven o'clock. The first bell was ringing, but not a soul was present, only the sexton in the vestibule with the bell-rope in his hands. Eight o'clock came, but the house was empty as ever. Then the second bell rang, after which the sexton entered the auditorium, but no sooner did he notice the extraordinary costume of the women than he retreated precipitately. Fifteen minutes afterwards he returned and seated himself on a bench by the stove. Still no one came. Half-past eight, and the sexton became nervous and fidgety. Even Terp was feeling chagrined at the absence of the audience, and mortified because the ladies did not come. At fifteen minutes of nine she abandoned all thought of her lecture, and, walking boldly down the aisle, seated herself by the side of the sexton, who was industriously engaged in squirting tobacco juice on the stove. He was a man past middle age, and otherwise harmless.

“Are you a married man?” queried the spinster.

“I be, mum,” he said, with a scared look in his face, “I be married and have fourteen kiddies, counting of the baby.”

After a pause and some reflection, she said:

“Do you know any steady-going, industrious young man hereabouts who is anxious to enter the holy state of matrimony?”

“What’s the word, mum?” he said, with a stare, “I be not good in book larnin’.”

She told him the accepted definition of the word matrimony, and he continued:

“Oh! yes, mum, there be lots of young men in these diggin’s as wants tew git married. Yes, mum, there be fools here like in other places.”

“You do not mean to say,” cried Terp, “that a man or woman is a fool for getting married?”

“That’s the size uv it, mum,” spluttered the sexton. “If I ever git out uv the scrape you won’t ketch me a gittin’ married agin. Take the advice of a man of experience; if ye ain’t married, mum, don’t ye do it; don’t git married onless ye hev ter, mum, and then do n’t if ye kin help it; there’s nothing in it but babies, mum, and sometimes twins at that.”

Terp soon lost all interest in the sexton, and adjourned the audience of two.

If you think she was completely disheartened you are mistaken. She was somewhat discouraged, but did not abandon her efforts, although I am told she never delivered the lecture.

Once at home again, she visited the sanctum of the most popular newspaper in the place, and gave an enterprising reporter a vivid description of her lecture at B——. What she said to him was never known exactly, but the next issue of the paper contained the following:

“We are pleased to announce the great success of talented Miss Terpsichore Graydon, daughter of our distinguished fellow-townsmen,

Nathaniel Chadsworth Graydon. It will be remembered that she recently entered the lecture field, and it has been a source of great displeasure among her many friends that she could not be prevailed upon to deliver her lecture in this place for the benefit of some of our charitable institutions, but she preferred to make her debut in the thriving village of B——, choosing, with the timidity of genius, to make her first appearance in a small town. We learn from reliable persons that her success was not only brilliant, but almost phenomenal. She arrived in B—— only a short time before the hour announced for the opening of her lecture. To *her* surprise, but not to the surprise of those acquainted with her, she was met at the depot by a vast concourse of people, such a crowd as the town had never held before. The lady was immediately escorted to a carriage by ex-Senator Linchpin, of Oskosh, and a grand procession started for the Unitarian Chapel, headed by the cornet band. The order of the procession was as follows: First came the brass band, followed by the carriage containing the lecturer and Senator Linchpin. This was followed by the Unitarian Sabbath School, with red sashes and torches; followed by the 'Cold Water Army,' 'Sons of Temperance' and 'Good Templars,' with picture banners representing the road to ruin, and torches; followed by the M. E. Sabbath School, in white muslin, with torches; followed by the Presbyterian Sabbath School, with satin sashes and silk stockings; followed by the various secret orders in regalia, camping torches, and banners; followed by citizens on foot, who were followed by a long line of citizens on horseback, in carriages, in buggies, and in other vehicles. It required two hours for the procession to pass a given point. At the Chapel only six hundred, of the five to eight thousand present, were able to get even standing room. The rest were obliged to retire to their several homes sorely disappointed. For two hours and thirty minutes the lady entertained the audience with her lecture, which is entitled: A Social Reform, or Shall we Equalize the Chances? being repeatedly interrupted by long continued bursts of applause. After the close of the lecture she was presented with a chain belt, made of silver, by the Y. M. C. A., and many other offerings were made by the delighted audience. Among other things was a beautifully frosted cake, presented by the *Creme de la Creme* society. The proceeds were immense, but, with her usual magnanimity, she donated it all to the Unitarian Sabbath School. The audience, by a rising vote, tendered its thanks, and invited her to return at an early date. We trust that some of the societies of this place will secure the opportunity of

hearing this eminent lady before she starts East, where she has been invited, by men and women of influence, to lecture in some of the principal towns and cities of that portion of the country."

This was the substance of the story told by Terp to the enterprising reporter. That individual was a young man with a vivid imagination and a fluctuating salary. His ability to enlarge, embellish and mystify made his services valuable, and he was an easy victim for Terp's agile tongue. He swallowed the entire dose, and pocketed the fee which she gave him. Unfortunately for her the foreman of the composing room was a man who knew a thing or two about various matters, and the notice appeared in the paper under the head of "New Advertisements," much to her dismay. She waited patiently for an invitation to lecture from the people of her native place, but none came. She was fast becoming a martyr, in her mind, and hastened to "read up" on all the martyrs of the past, and arrived at the conclusion that the leaders of all great reforms must be martyrs of the cause they espouse. So it was in history; so it would be to the end of time. In reading the lives of the martyrs it seemed to her that just as soon as a reformer had his ideas before the public he would lose his head, and was she any better than the mighty hosts of reformers whom the world had sent to untimely graves? That the public manifested no desire to hear her was not the slightest evidence that her lecture was a weak one. On the contrary, she argued that the public never appreciates a good thing when they have it in easy reach, and, after all, there is a great deal of solid comfort in posing as a martyr, and casting one's self down for the sake of a great cause.

One incident I must relate, which I am aware will be of little or no interest to the reader. I speak of it because it was a thing that opened Nathaniel Graydon's eyes, and gave him a clearer glimpse of his elder daughter's character, although he was sure he had been acquainted with her for

many years. It happened in this way: Otto von Sweitzerbeck was a very respectable man, and played a brass horn in the Dutch band, which fact, alone, caused a coldness to spring up between himself and his neighbors. Notwithstanding this, he was, as I have said, a very respectable man. The foundation of his respectability was very strong, being a robust bank account on the desirable side of the ledger. His respectability was on the increase, because his bank account was on the increase, and he paid his taxes promptly. He had one serious and glaring fault, that of becoming intoxicated, but you know "riches cover a multitude of sins." Drunkenness covered with broadcloth, and drunkenness covered with rags, are two grades of the same iniquity. I do not mean to say that this man reeled and swaggered through the streets when so intoxicated, for he was one of the few men who can drink themselves stone blind, deaf, dumb, and idiotic, yet walk as straight and gracefully as a brigadier general on dress parade. It was rumored that his legs were hollow, and, being a large gentleman, his capacity for intoxicants was as great as a distillery vat.

At a late hour one cold night as Terp was tripping home from a society meeting, she encountered this individual, who stopped immediately in front of her and extended his hand in token of his warmest regard. Then he stared at her in a semi-idiotic way, and seemed greatly embarrassed and unable to comprehend the situation.

"My dear sir," said Terp, in her most winning way, "can I be of any assistance? You seem unwell."

"Mine frent," said Otto, with great effort; "Mine frent, I vas ead some wet dings, und loose mine house some blace around."

"My dear sir," chirruped Terp, who saw that the man was completely bewildered, "your residence is three squares down the street, and you are going the wrong way. Take my arm, and I will be delighted to assist you homeward."

She did not understand the true condition of the mystified gentleman. She noticed that his breath was very repulsive, but thought it was the regulation Dutch odor, and was very glad to be of assistance to Otto von Sweitzerbeck, whom she regarded as a good subject for matrimony.

Otto was on one of those cumulative and aggressive drunks which demand a broad climax, and when Terp found him he was wrestling with the climax. He was a bachelor, and was, of course, conscious of the charms and an easy victim to the blandishments of the female sex. He leaned upon the arm of his happy companion, and his arm finally encircled her waist in a passionate kind of way, squeezing her as fondly as a lover.

“My dear sir,” cried the eager spinster, “I know you to be a gentleman of too much good sense to trifle with the affections of any one, especially one who has always been your friend and admirer. Am I to understand that you are matrimonially inclined?”

A Dutch grunt, laden with limberger and garlic, and a prolonged squeeze followed, and was considered an affirmative answer.

“You love me well enough to make me your lawfully wedded wife?” she said, with a scriptural intonation of voice.

“Yaw!” said the dazed Dutchman, not at all understanding the meaning of her words, but squeezing her rapturously. The squeezing and lover-like demonstrations became general, on both sides, and Terp whispered burning words of love into the big ear of her intended. The night was cold, and having arrived at Otto’s residence she rang the bell violently and left him rather abruptly.

The world was hardly wide enough for Terp during the remainder of that night. Oh, bliss! multiplied innumerably! Wasn’t she engaged to be married? and, best of all, hadn’t she been squeezed—actually squeezed, by a man—a real, live man, with hair all over his face? Would n’t the ladies

of the different churches fawn upon her now? and would n't they get snubbed? Revenge is sweet, and they all deserved a thorough snubbing. She would be richer than any of them, and her husband a great musician—she was fond of music when it was made by a man. Life would be one continued round of pleasure, and the honeymoon would never set. So she drifted through all the thoroughfares of prospective bliss until early dawn. She expected her beloved Otto to visit her during the morning, and make the preliminary arrangements for the wedding. She dressed with unusual care, being careful to select the kind of clothing which she thought would please him best. She waited all morning for him, but he did not come. Perhaps he was sick, poor fellow, and could not come. She would find out that very afternoon, for she knew he must be suffering for her sympathy. At two o'clock that P. M. she was very restless, and at half-past two was in her father's private office, dressed for a trip to the home of her proposed husband. Her father knew at a glance that something unusual was disturbing the mind of his eldest daughter, and gave audience at once.

“Father,” she said, serenely, “I called to inform you of my approaching marriage with Mr. Otto von Sweitzerbeck.”

The old man started violently, as if the news was a great shock, but said nothing.

“Yes,” she continued, “I have concluded to enter the sacred domain of wedlock, and have made my choice of a husband from among the many, with great caution and due deliberation. For two years past Otto has been my devoted admirer, but it was only last night that an agreement was reached and an engagement entered into. He begged me to bring you to his residence this afternoon, that we may talk the matter over and fix a day for the nuptials. He would call on you, but the poor dear is not well to-day. So, father, will you please adjust your clothing properly, and come with me?”

The old man did as requested, and the two were soon on their way to the residence of Sweitzerbeck.

Otto was "at home," and his head had ached all day at a terrific rate from the effects of last night's dissipation. When Terp and Nathaniel arrived he had a wet cloth around his head and was passably sober. He welcomed the old gentleman cordially, but much to his surprise Terp threw her arms around him, and cried out rapturously:

"My dear Otto, I am so glad to see you again after a parting which seemed to be eternity itself."

"Mine Got in Himmels!" cried the horrified Teuton, breaking from her embrace and rushing around the room like a crazy man.

Nathaniel seated himself by a bust of Pallas, and awaited developments.

"Darling Otto," pleaded the spinster, giving chase, "you surely forget yourself; you are not well or you would not thus forsake the one you clung to so tenderly last night."

The Dutchman brought up behind a card table, and Terp halted about the center of the room in amazement. Something that would not fully materialize glimmered through von Sweitzerbeck's mind, and he addressed her excitedly as follows:

"Oxguse me, uf you blease. Shoost speag right away oud and oxblain doze eegstraortinary greedings mit me. Oxblain! oxblain! uf you blease."

"Sir! your conduct, not mine, needs explanation," she cried, majestically. "I simply claim my privilege as your affianced bride, and you go into a violent passion and fly from my embrace as you would fly from the embrace of a cinnamon bear, and howl 'oxblain! oxblain!' until the foundations of the house rattle. Now, sir, I will ask you to explain to my father, who, please note, carries a heavy hickory cane."

Nathaniel was strangely passive, and Otto was not afraid of canes anyway, for he said:

“Mine Got in Himmels, Meester Grayton, your dauder vas off mit her het. I vas nopody’s fool, unt I vas got marreet to some leedle Dietch gal nexd spring, und she vears mit her vinger all around a vat-you-gall-et ring.”

“So you are engaged to another woman?” she cried hotly. “Father, why do you not get up and cane him for thus trifling with me?”

But the old man said naught and cared naught.

“Villain!” she continued, “you shall yet pay for insulting me in this manner. Father, I have told you how this man insulted me. Last night I met him on the street in a half-frozen condition; I took the viper to my bosom and warmed him to life. He was quite sick, and I assisted him to his residence. He appeared deeply grateful, professed to love me, asked me to become his wife, and actually sq—sq—squeezed me; hugged me in the open street, under the broad glare of the street lamps. Shall he go unpunished, or shall he receive his just deserts? My reputation is at stake; my affections have been trampled upon by his big Dutch feet.”

But the old man did not punish anyone.

“Mine Got!” said the excited Dutchman, whose sluggish brain had just grasped the situation, “Meester Crayton, I dells you all aboud um. Last nide I vas oud mit der boys und got vull mit wet dings. Ven I vas come home somepody dake me, put I knows nodings ’til dis day, ven I wakes ub mit mine het on top uf my shoulters turnt ubside town, ant all sblit out mit aches. I squeeze somedings, but I dinks it vas a lampboast; eef it vas de lady, I opes the madam oxguse me.”

And still Nathaniel did not knock him down.

“Oh! you were intoxicated! that’s it, is it?” volleyed the spinster; “you mean, contemptible smearcase masticator! you beetle-browed garlic vat! you flat-headed, beer-drinking, limberger exterminator! Oh, to think that I ever dreamed of uniting my fortunes with a man whose only business in life is

to assimilate hops and toot on a brass horn. Congratulate me, father, upon my timely escape."

But the old gentleman did not congratulate anyone.

"I go," cried Terp, shaking her finger at the Dutchman as defiantly as Cataline; "I go, but I shall not return. I wish you much joy with your 'leedle Dietch gal.' Adieu!"

Terp and her father were soon homeward bound, but the old gentleman did not evince any outward emotion, nor bid von Sweitzerbeck farewell.

"Oh, father," cried the antiquated crank, "I have made such a narrow escape. It makes me shudder to think how nearly I was to the gulf of wedlock, and to think that I should ever consent to mate with that lop-eared Dutchman. Man is a base deceiver, and heartless beyond expression; but, father, why do you remain so quiet; why do you not speak to me?"

Nathaniel Graydon was most eloquently silent, and did not make answer to any of her ceaseless chatter, which continued until they reached home and separated.

Nathaniel Graydon's silence was enforced. He had something to say, emphatically, but he deemed it best to wait. He did not believe in using profane language on trivial occasions, but he was convinced that there are a great many things that come into a man's life that cannot be straightened out without a free use of profane words. This, in his judgment, was a case requiring profanity, and he wanted to be alone for a short time. His daughter's character was before him in a new light, at least a stranger light. He had gained a deeper insight, and was troubled by the knowledge obtained.

For consolation, he sought "The Book of the House of Graydon." It was "his Bible," as his daughters often laughingly remarked. He was quite sure he could find in it a precedent for any trait of character that might develop in his children. He searched long and earnestly along the line

of Terp's ancestors, on the Driver side of the house, until he found the following :

"Samantha Jane Driver, eldest daughter of Obediah and Jerusha Ann Driver, was born in Guilford county, North Carolina. Her father was foreman in Beard's hatter shop, and was an industrious man. Samantha early developed a matrimonial instinct, and was bad after the men. At the age of eighteen she was struck by lightning, at Dobson's cross-roads, while drinking water from a pool. After this, she became cranky and reckless, and her career was checkered. She was married seven times within four years, and finally eloped with a strolling clay-biter, and was never afterwards heard from by her family."

This then, to his mind, accounted for Terp's irregularities. The same stroke of lightning had reached through several decades, casting its strength along the line, and finally reaching Terpsichore. The old man could almost see the aligator swamps and smoky hills of far-off North Carolina by the glare of the bolt that struck Terp; and he almost wished that some reckless dirt-eater from the South, or any other place, would come in and claim her, and that she might vanish as did Samantha Jane, never to return. He turned the leaves of the book until he arrived at page 900, desiring to add something to her record. He used a lead pencil vigorously for some time and wrote a lengthy addition; then closed the book with military decision, and placed it in his book case. For some time he walked excitedly up and down the room; then he took the book down again, and with a rubber eraser, erased all he had written; then he placed the book again in its place in the case; then he resumed his walk around the room for several moments with a soldierly tread; then he took the book down again, but did not reopen it for some time; there was a struggle going on and he deemed it his duty to make an entry for future reference. To satisfy his own conscience and at the same time give no pain to others, he turned to what might be called the fly leaf of this remarkable book, and wrote, with his plain society flourish, these words on the margin :

"There is a fool in the family."

CHAPTER V.

AMONG THE ROSES.

You may imagine that the mansion of the Graydons was situated within the borders of a populous city ; if so, you are mistaken.

L—— was not, nor is it at the present time, a city, although it had, and has, a bonded indebtedness, and in many ways has, for a quarter of a century past, assumed city airs. It was not, nor is it, a small village, notwithstanding some of its inhabitants walk in the middle of the road, to and from their places of business, ignoring the sidewalks altogether.

I never knew the population of L——, but this I do know: It had an opera house, seven small churches, five saloons, three dry goods stores, thirteen grocery stores, three newspapers, a hero of three wars, a prima donna, who was “born to blush unseen, and waste her sweetness on the desert air,” a few of the leading literary lights of the west, a statesman who was good enough for the white house, a tax-title shark, a court house, a school professor, who was one of the most prominent educators of the state, two banks, a half dozen suppressed society and church scandals, and several that were not suppressed. Knowing this much of L——, I do not hesitate in saying that the population of the place was, probably, thirty or thirty-five hundred souls. What is true of *one* western town is generally true of another.

The Graydon Place, as it was called, was at the west end of a long street, in the suburbs ; or, rather, looking at it from town, it seemed to stand squarely in the center of the street. On approach, however, you could readily discern that the proprietor had not made the mistake of building his house in the public highway, but that the road forked at a respectable distance from the house, leaving the premises in very beauti-

ful shape. The house was roomy enough, but quite plain outside. Nathaniel said, while the house was building, "I will make it substantial, and spend my money on the inside of it," and he did so, for there was not a more elegantly finished house, in the interior, in all that country. The premises had been platted to suit Nathaniel's fancy, long ago, and his daughters regarded it a part of their religious duty to care for the flowers, plants, shrubs, and grass plots, and keep them always clean and attractive. There were, perhaps, too many rose bushes embroidering the walks and drive-ways; too many Irish junipers; too many balsam firs and cedars; too many honeysuckle and clematis plants; entirely too much cast iron and marble sculpture; too many miniature and artificial fountains; but considered in its entirety, it was a very beautiful and wholesome place. On the south was a large orchard of apples, pears, and Morello cherries; also, adjoining and belonging to the estate was a large corn field, the fences of which were lined with elder bushes, which were never to be destroyed, for the girls had said that an elder bush was worth a half-acre of corn, on account of the sweet-smelling blooms; for the same reason a few forlorn and ragged locust trees were allowed to exist in an obscure corner of the place.

The crowning achievement in this Oriental bit of earth was what these happy damsels called "The Wigwam." I never knew why it was so named, for it had a striking resemblance to something not a wigwam. In fact, there was a painful dissimilarity between this pleasant retreat and my idea of a wigwam. The difference between it and a wigwam is, that a wigwam is a wigwam, and this was something else. It was made by a circle of white maple trees, which had matted their branches together in a way that baffled the sunbeams and formed a dense shade within the limits of the circle. Around the rim of this charmed spot was a dense growth of flowers, shrubs, and plants, reaching

almost to the branches of the maples, and making a most delightful enclosure. On the interior was a circular row of seats, and four goddesses placed at equal distances apart; in the center was a large fountain, which was of great height, and its waters seemed always falling from somewhere up among the branches of the maples; a circular fish pond was at its base, filled with black bass, and many floating and creeping things. A floor of marble tiling added much to the appearance of this sylvan retreat, and its interior could scarcely have been more attractive and lovely on a summer day. The one thing that marred its loveliness, in the eyes and minds of these maidens, was the marble goddesses—or, rather, the personal appearance of these bits of stone. They had been hewn out by some amateur sculptor, whose idea of sculptured beauty was physical strength. For instance: one, the goddess Diana, stood up entirely nude; her legs and arms were larger than her body, and she looked more like a Swedish emigrant than a deity. In time the deformed statues became repulsive to the gaze of the noble-minded girls, and they covered the base of each, and in fact the entire surface of each, with climbing vines and flowering plants. I admire the spirit that caused them to hide the vulgar objects, for there is nothing so hideous to a sensitive nature as the nude in art. I have seen young men and ladies stand admiringly before a naked female, in marble or oil, who would feel insulted if an obscene photograph were offered them for inspection.

In the Good Book we learn that our God was the first sculptor: that He made *His* images of clay, and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life. Adam was the first admirer of the nude in art, and Eve, with the instinct of true womanhood, would not appear naked before her husband and her God. In the shades of Eden she made an apron of fig-leaves—thus administering the first rebuke to those enraptured sensualists who see nothing so beautiful in art as bare

legs and voluptuous bosoms, and seek to elevate the soul by stimulating the animal passions. A leg is a leg, and a bare bosom is a bare bosom, whether in marble, or in oil, or in the flesh.

I wish you to note and give due weight to a few small things noticeable in the character and personal appearance of these three Sybarites. Their clothing was elegant and costly, yet always selected with good taste, and with a view to pleasing the generous-hearted, but sensible, Minerva. Therefore, there was nothing gaudy or "loud" in the way of adornment, and the very fact that they had never worn any kind of a dress, except the high-neck and long-sleeve kinds, was a circumstance in a chain of circumstantial evidence, showing that they were graciously modest, regardless of the demands of fashion, and the embodiment of refinement and Christian culture. In thus speaking of the girls, I mean the *Three Graces* of this happy home, not including Terpsichore. The Graydon girls, barring Terp, were generous and kind to all respectable and worthy acquaintances, and to every one they met, whether rich or poor. The rich admired them and courted their favor, but all essential things being equal, the smiles of a rich man or woman were of no more value to them than the good will and warm friendship of a poverty-stricken man or woman. They reached out more helping hands, scattered more deeds of kindness, went on more errands of mercy, than did all the combined number of maidens of their acquaintance. They knew by intuition that they had immortal souls that required the strength that comes only from exercise and discipline. Their hearts had been trained in the ways of virtue; their minds were attuned to the notes of that invisible harp which great-souled men and women hear when they close their eyes upon the wickedness and clamor of the world, and dream of doing good. Being light-hearted, they did not view life with jaundiced eyes, but their good cheer was limited to the legitimate. They knew how to enjoy life, but

were perfect ladies under all circumstances — just the same at home, or at church, or at the opera, or at the railroad depot. Their great attachment and love for one another were plainly visible, and never were the strength and value of sisterly affection more beautifully exemplified than in the lives of these three maidens. You will probably surmise that they had lovers, but I have a surprise in store for you — they were engaged, actually engaged, each and every one of them — I mean the three girls, barring Terp, of course.

The successful suitors were worthy young men of the world — the business world, and their characters conformed, so far as canvassed, to “mamma’s” splendid ideas of morality, and to “papa’s” fastidious views of manliness.

They had been engaged about two weeks, and this chapter finds them, rather late at night, walking in the flower garden and through the lawns. It was about the middle of June, I think. The air, though laden with the perfume of sweet-smelling flowers, was somewhat sultry, but hardly oppressive enough to crowd departed spirits out of their last resting places, and send them roaming through the earth in search of fresh air. Notwithstanding this fact, there was a ghost in the garden among the plants and flowers; an angular spook in white, with a big palm leaf fan in its hand. Some persons do not believe in ghosts, but here was a spectacle that would have convinced the most skeptical. To be sure it did not exactly float through the air, for the tread of its feet was plainly audible; but then its beetle-crushers may have materialized so strongly that it gave them weight enough to make a noise. It was a female ghost, too, for it wore crinoline, at least, a very, very large tilter. Evidently it expected something or somebody, for it seated itself upon a rustic seat, just outside the wigwam, at the vine-covered base of the shameless Diana. Now and then it would raise its Roman visage and peer in among the shadows of the trees and shrubbery, and again lapse into an attitude of ghostly

indifference. If its anticipations were verified or not I can not say, but sure it is that the sound of footsteps soon fell upon the ears of the spectre — it had ears, and very large ones at that — and Rudolph Germain and his affianced Frosie sauntered down the walk, entered the wigwam, and seated themselves on a small bench, just large enough for two, at the base of Diana, so near the specter that it could have touched them with its parasol if it had had a parasol and had been so inclined. A large oleander and some shrubbery separated the spook from the lovers, hiding it effectually, but it could hear all they had to say.

Rudolph Germain was, in the main, a noble fellow, and almost fanatically zealous in serving his friends. He was, also, sensitive to a degree that often caused him to impute wrong motives to those who were not his enemies. If he loved his friends overmuch, it is equally true that he hated his enemies with the same degree of enthusiasm. If he was unswerving in his ideas of business honor and personal integrity, it is equally true that he possessed a meager endowment of *hard common sense*. If he was the very essence of virtue and industry among men, it is equally true that in the presence of women he was bashful and thin-skinned. His inability to acquire rhinosorosity of cuticle often caused him to appear at a great disadvantage, and he was often gloomy and would brood for days over a fancied wrong or insult. In fact, he was a man who, in the heat of passion, would be sorely tempted to commit a terrible crime, and a moment after be almost consumed by feelings of remorse and regret. That dark and unwholesome passions existed in his nature cannot be denied. I outline, thus briefly, the weak side of this man's character, in order that you may know what caused him to do as he did. I wish I could reveal to you in its true color, the royal side of his character, but I must not. I say of him the best thing that can be said of any man: who knew him best loved him best.

In personal appearance he was compactly built, and something of an athlete to the mind of the close observer. Straight as an arrow, with eyes that would flash and sparkle with unusual brilliancy when their owner was animated with some strong desire or sudden passion—eyes that could radiate the warmth of the summer's sun or freeze your blood at pleasure. His complexion was fair, hair and moustache emphatically dark.

He was saying: "You say I am jealous-hearted, Frossie, and I admit the truth of what you say. How could it be otherwise under the existing state of affairs? I love you, therefore I am jealous. Jealousy is the best evidence of love. If I did not love you, I would see no reason to complain."

"Be jealous, if you will be, Rudolph, but remember that your rival is a man of straw: a pasteboard skeleton that comes, always, as an invited guest at your feast."

"Is Paul Satalia a pasteboard skeleton, my love?"

"Presumably not, although he looks as if the wind would some time blow him away. How foolish you are, Rudolph, to give him a single thought. You know that he has been and is my preceptor in music, and a right faithful and competent teacher he has been. Am I to blame if he loves me?"

"Frossie, I cannot think ill of you, but this terrible doubt as to your attitude toward your instructor is what hurts me. The other day I called and was informed that you were in the parlor receiving a lesson in music. I called again in two hours, and you were still learning music. Oh! Frossie, does it require so long to learn a single lesson?"

"I learned *two* lessons on that occasion—one in music, and one in love; that is, I learned that my teacher loved me."

"Will you tell me what he said?" rather crustily.

"Certainly. You see, he has been drilling me in the beautiful 'Wedding March,' which I am to play at the Rairdon-Smith wedding next Wednesday, and has learned me to play it to perfection. Well, on this occasion, he was particu-

larly painstaking, and I am sure was proud of my skillful performance, for he said so. By and by he was through. I was seated on the piano-stool, idly drumming the keys, and assure you, Rudolph, that I had no previous knowledge of his affections, although I had noticed that he always spoke to me in a tender and graceful way. He was standing by my side, very close, and all of a sudden bent over me and said very sweetly, 'My little woman, you are very beautiful.'

"Then, Frossie, I suppose you excused yourself, and left the room at once?"

"Indeed, I did not."

"Proceed!"

"I just waited for further developments, and they came speedily. He clasped my hand very passionately with one hand, and stroked my hair, oh, so softly, with the other."

"Then you gave him to understand his place, and told him to release you and leave the room?"

"Of course, I did nothing of the kind, Rudolph."

"Well," hotly, "what did you do?"

"What could I do but wait and see what his intentions were? Before I could prevent it, he kissed me and said very softly, in his sweet musical tones, 'My darling, my darling! I love you.'"

"Oh, the scoundrel! Did you ring the bell and call for help?"

"I did not."

"Well," despairingly, "what did you do?"

"I arose from the stool, walked across the room, and seated myself upon the sofa."

"And," suspiciously, "what did he do?"

"Oh, he came and sat by my side."

"On the same sofa?" fiercely.

"Yes, on the same sofa."

"How close was he?"

"Well," evasively, "you know the sofa is quite small."

“What did he do then?” almost angrily.

“He put his arm around my waist, and squeezed a little.”

“And you permitted him without a word of objection?”

“What could I do? He seemed to enjoy it so much, poor fellow, and you was n’t there, you know, and I was so lonesome.”

“Frossie,” looking at her with his arms folded, and she could almost feel the blood-freezing light in his eyes, “do you think I will allow Paul Satalia to come between you and my love? Am I a school boy, to be trifled with in this way? No! you are mine, and I cannot live without you. He shall not interfere. There is no sacrifice I would not make for you. I have laid at your feet my fortune, my reputation, my very soul, and you have a mortgage on my future. If it was necessary I would lay my life down for your sake. With you I could sail peacefully and happily over the tempestuous tide of human affairs; without your love to sustain me, my heart would break. No man who truly loves can give up the woman of his choice without a struggle, for the life of one is the life of the other. Do you think I would allow him to steal from me all the brightness of this world? If he robs me of your love he must die—I swear it! If he takes my treasure away from me, I will hunt him down; he could not escape me, and when I found him I would kill him—squeeze every drop of blood from his vile carcass and throw him to the dogs. You are mine! *mine* for time and eternity, and no power between the stars and hell can take you from me!”

Frossie had never seen her lover in one of his terrible moods, and was thoroughly frightened. Tears came to her eyes, and in a moment her arms were twined about him in love’s fond embrace.

“Forgive me, Rudolph, I did not think you cared so much. I magnified the story just to tease you, indeed I did. I told him of our engagement, and gave him no room for hope. I could never learn to love him, and yet I pity him, for he has

always been kind to me and so enthusiastically devoted to my musical education. He will visit me no more as a teacher, and will be received as other friends are received. Many a young man has sought my hand and heart. Can I help being loved? Am I to blame because I am handsome? Is the earth an unfit dwelling place for man because the sun kisses it and warms it to life and energy? Are the stars less brilliant because the poets all sing about them? Are the flowers less fragrant and beautiful because all noble-minded men and women admire them? And is a woman less womanly and worthy because she attracts the attention of many men, and has many suitors for whom she cares nothing at all? Indeed, Rudolph, I can not help being handsome. If it would please you better I would shave my head and wear goggles, indeed I would. Darling, you must not doubt my love again, promise me that, for I love you, and you alone of all men. I am yours, soul and body, forever and forever yours. My life! my love! into your keeping I place my dreams of earthly bliss; my hopes of future happiness! my all. My love is undivided, too deep to be fathomed by human understanding; too strong to yield to the blandishments of those who might seek to destroy it. Do you trust me now? Will you doubt me again?"

Did you ever see a beautiful landscape after a shower, in the warm spring weather, when the sun would out from under a cloud and set the birds to singing, the flowers to blooming, and the grass to springing? Such was Germain's condition. His face fairly beamed in the moonlight, and his heart was throbbing with his great love. The great fountain foamed and splashed, soft winds whispered above their heads, and the air was burdened with the odor of roses. Rudolph Germain and Frossie Graydon were very happy indeed.

The disgusted specter on the bench outside placed her fingers to her ears as an immodest, innumerable, and irrational number of passionate kisses sounded through the branches

of the oleander and the dense foliage that screened it from view. The couple wandered down the path on the opposite side and left it alone.

CHAPTER VI.

FAMILIAR SPIRITS.

The spook was not long alone, for scarcely had the sound of footsteps died away until other steps were audible, and Mr. Tiberius O'Leeds and Miss Thalia Graydon came down a walk from an opposite direction, entered the wigwam, and seated themselves on the bench just vacated.

O'Leeds was not an Irishman, as his name would indicate, at least he was not so considered, though he possessed much true Hibernian wit, and I suspect that some of his ancestors had been hung for rebellion in Ireland. He looked more like a Scotchman, having sandy hair, a florid complexion, blue-gray eyes, and blonde side whiskers and eyebrows; at least, the color of his beard and eyebrows was not so decided as that of his hair. He was light-hearted, and sometimes a trifle reckless in conversation.

"My sweet Thalia," (the ears of the specter fanned the atmosphere in expectation,) "can you imagine how Napoleon felt when he escaped from Elba, and regained his crown and his glory?"

"I think he must have felt very happy, Tiberius."

"Can you imagine the feelings of Mordecai when he was rescued from the clutches of Haman, placed on the king's best horse, all bespangled with diamonds, a crown on his head, and his mortal enemy humbled before the people and hung on the gallows that had been erected for himself?"

"I suppose he was glad, but it's awful wicked to hang anybody."

“Thalia, Napoleon and Mordecai were not more thankful for deliverance than I am.”

“Tiberius O’Leeds, what do you mean?”

“I mean that I am no longer in danger of living and dying an old bachelor, for I am to be married to the sweetest little woman on this terrestrial ball.”

And there was a sudden concussion and blending of two celestial bodies; after which Tiberius resumed:

“Yes, sweetheart, I was fast becoming an ancient mariner on the social tide, soured and disgusted at things I once enjoyed. I fancied that men were donkeys, and that women were sage-hens, browsing around on the sun-burnt meadows of their own existence. My life was joyless until you arose like a day-star above the horizon of my existence.”

And immediately there was another blending of heavenly bodies.

“Sweet love, I am glad you found my heart, for an old bachelor can not be a patriot or a good citizen. His blood does not circulate correctly, and his mind does not run in proper grooves. It is the duty of each man to choose wisely and well from among the many eager damsels that beset his pathway; and it is the duty of each woman to take her place alongside the man that destiny brings, willing to perform her part on the stage of action, and share the mutual reward of wedded bliss with becoming dignity; and, my star-eyed Thalia, the very angels sent you to bring my soul to the surface again.”

Followed by a series of seraphic blendings and smothered smacks.

“Darling Tiberius, we shall be so happy together, for our souls are congenial. I think of nothing, dream of nothing but you. Only yesterday I was painting a landscape, thinking of you all the time. The work was progressing nicely, when my thoughts of you made me forget myself, and I painted your ear right on a hillside where I intended to make

a farm house. The other day I painted a water-lily, and afterwards found I had made a pair of bluish eyes right above it, and I remembered that your eyes were peering at me from the canvas all the time. Such foolish things my great love causes me to do. Oh, Tiberius, if I should loose you now it would either kill me outright or cause me to retire from society altogether, and then I should become an ugly old maid—perhaps as old and ugly as Terp, but I never could be as hateful.”

The specter outside straightened bolt upright and looked savage.

“My precious darling, all day long I am as happy as a bird. You are not an old bachelor, only a trifle older than myself, and I love, love, love you all the time.”

Terrific concussions and prolonged blendings. The wind softly sighed and sobbed above them; the stars smiled lovingly down; waters trickled from among the branches, splashing and foaming, and the flowers breathed their sweetest incense. Tiberius O’Leeds and Thalia Graydon were very happy indeed. As for the specter, it was thoroughly disgusted, and looked as if it had recently swallowed a dose of lobelia. Arising abruptly, it floated out among and through the shrubbery, but evidently its mission as eavesdropper was not ended, for within twenty minutes thereafter it was again seated on the rustic bench ready to listen to what it heard from Mr. Zebulon Weiler and Miss Aglaia Graydon, who had arrived immediately after the departure of Tiberius and Thalia, and were seated on the trysting-bench, entirely oblivious to surroundings.

Zebulon was a heavy, sonorous kind of a man, with a voice that was somewhere between the dulcet tones of a saxaphone and the bellow of a pennyroyal bull. In appearance he was rather Dutchy, very dark grey eyes, dark hair, and chin whiskers of no certain color. Aggie loved him because she thought him good, and handled him as though he

was a wad of molasses candy. When a fellow is, apparently, too good to do anything bad, bland as a stuck pig, and as practical as a Congressional record, some sweet-faced girl is sure to fall in love with him because her mamma has taught her to admire the good and the true. Zebulon was a lump of inert matter, whose placid, oyster-like bearing made him appear well in the eyes of the devoted damsel.

The specter listened intently, and by and by he began to rumble :

“ Aggie, I feel assured that our married life will be pleasant and profitable. I shall live with your welfare constantly in view, and you shall receive every attention your comfort and convenience may require. I am very glad that our temperaments are compatible, for compatibility, in my opinion, is of great value in married life. Conjugal bliss is dependent upon the adaptability of the contracting persons — that is, it depends upon their ability to adapt themselves to the untried and unknown circumstances that arise in married life. If one gets married everything changes. I myself was fast becoming a disciple of Epicurus — ”

“ Who was Epicurus, sweet love ? ”

“ He was a man who believed in eating, sleeping, and having a good time, teaching that bodily ease should be the highest aim of man’s life. He would drink sometimes like a fish, and gave himself credit for being a philosopher and philanthropist. Of course, eating and sleeping are first among the great blessings of this world, but I would n’t drink ; it costs too much. ”

After a long pause : “ My dear, is there anyone in or near the wigwam ? ”

Tremblingly anxious and hopeful : “ No, my love, there is no one near. ”

After a painful suspense : “ Are you quite sure ? ”

Nervously but determined : “ Yes, dear, dear Zebulon, I am *very* sure. ”

Another pause of five minutes, standard time: "Aggie, my dear, will you examine the premises?"

Aggie springs up, passes hurriedly around the interior of the wigwam, looking under benches, shrubs, flowers, bushes, and so forth, and returns.

Eagerly: "Darling! my own, my precious one, there is no one near."

Another elaborate pause, and he rumbles: "Aggie, my dear!"

Preparing for action: "My ownest own."

With calm decision, as if regardless of consequences: "Let us osculate."

And they osculated.

A lengthy flash of silence ensues, after which:

"Aggie, my dear."

"Yes, my love."

"My mind is troubled."

"My poor darling!"

"Yes, I am sorely troubled about a matter that concerns our future happiness."

"Then, why have you not sooner spoken? You know that I am to share your burdens now, love."

"I was afraid you would be offended."

"Offended by you? Oh, Zebulon, how can you say it!"

"If I wound your feelings, will you forgive me, Aggie?"

"Yes, my darling, but do not longer keep me in suspense."

"Remember, my dear, that all the happiness or misery of our wedded life hinges upon your answer to a single question. It is better to understand ourselves before we unite our destinies."

"My own, my precious Zebulon, give me the question and I will give you the answer."

"It is this: do you purpose writing poetry after our marriage?"

“Zebulon Weiler, what nonsense; you dear, good fellow. If writing poetry in any way interferes with the full enjoyment of connubial bliss, then of course I should lay down my pen and think no more of rhymes. I do not flatter myself that I am more than a literary rattle-box, and I could discard literary pursuits so easily and quietly that the world would never know of it nor suffer any loss therefrom.”

“Aggie, you have lifted a heavy load from my mind, and I breathe in a new atmosphere. I was afraid you were so strongly attached to your literary work that you could not give it up.”

“No, Zebulon; although I am a member of the International Writers’ Mutual Aid Association, I have no desire to get higher. I never enjoyed the meetings of the association. The many good productions of the society were covered up by the mutual-admiration-penny-a-liners, who have neither culture nor common sense. There are so many cats, sparrows, and parrots in the literary world that I shall make no special effort to enter it. Dear love, trust me, and I will be to you a good and true wife.”

After a slight pause, Aggie said: “Excuse me,” and made a thorough search around the wigwam, and coming back to Zebulon, said: “Dear Zebulon, I have made a thorough search, and there is positively no one near the wigwam.”

After a long silence, “Aggie, my dear?”

With great emotion: “My own love.”

With the calm resignation of a man who is trying to do his whole duty in this vile world: “Let us osculate.”

And they osculated.

The specter outside could endure it no longer, and springing up, uttered an exclamation of deep disgust, audible to the lovers, and then floated into the shadows and fled. The lovers clasped each other in abject terror.

“It was —” cried he.

“The cat!” said she.

The south winds sighed softly in the branches above their heads, the great moon smiled, the stars twinkled; the fountain splashed, and the flowers still breathed their incense to the gentle breezes. Zebulon Weiler and Aggie Graydon were very happy indeed.

Disembodied spirits are said to be nomadic in disposition, and if one spook has a right to float around among the shrubbery, at the dead hour of night, other spooks have the same right. Therefore, it was not strange that the female ghost should meet a masculine ghost that night, as it was ambling along near the family mansion. Spook number two was a very thin specimen of ghost, but every inch of a *departed* being. He was very slim, and dressed in a swallow-tail coat and white vest. His long hair was as black as the wings of the raven, curling slightly at the ends, smooth face, black, restless eyes, and mean, sinister mouth, that had about it, at times, a hyena-like smile, reminding one intuitively of the poet's words: "A man may smile and smile and be a villain still." Yet barring the jackal grin, he was rather of prepossessing appearance. It was obvious that these supernatural visitants were "familiar spirits." It is possible they had been friends on this mundane sphere before entering the Cimmerian shades of the unknown. It may be true, as the preacher says, when confronted with an argument on the subject of "Spiritualism": "If spirits do return, they are only evil spirits, and, therefore, not fit for the companionship of decent people," for each of these spooks was fanning and using a 'kerchief vigorously, which might indicate that they were from a climate that was entirely too tropical, or that they were sensitive to heat and were perspiring from force of habit. To be sure, the atmosphere was extremely warm and oppressive, but, of course, ghosts are not affected by the temperature of the atmosphere of this terraqueous ball. Be it as it may, it was, as I have said, evident that they were acquainted, for the female goblin, after adjusting her tilter, said, rather coolly:

“You here?”

“Yes, I am here. I could not stay away to-night. I must see her, or reason will be dethroned. The knowledge that Frossie loves another causes my brain to reel.”

“Your brain should not be so easily overbalanced.”

“But I tell you I love her — nay, I worship her!”

“Which shows you to be a man of excellent taste. It is nothing strange that you love her, for it is impossible for any one to know her and not love her; but that fact does not give you the right to prowl around an honest man’s house, in the middle of the night, without being invited to do so.”

“But I dare to assume the right to do so.”

“Burglars do the same.”

“I am honorable, and have no desire to offend; but my head is throbbing and my heart is breaking under this burden of unrequited love — for she does not love me.”

“If she does not love you, why do you come as a thief in the night? It is hardly worth your while. Frossie is a house plant, and should be in doors after nightfall.”

“Oh! if I could only see her and talk with her, I might win her love. I could woo a cat from the gates of Paradise.”

“I do not question your ability and influence among the felines, and I have heard that a crawling reptile is sometimes able to charm a sweet-voiced bird from the light of the sun and joy of the world into the jaws of death. As a beguiler, your ability is conceded; as a man of sense and honor you are a flat failure.”

“Accept my profound thanks for your candor, but you cannot change my purpose. She is mine. I have sworn it.”

“My sanguine night-hawk, doubtful things are sometimes very uncertain. Frossie would never learn to love you. You say she is yours, and why do you say it?”

“She is mine because I love her.”

“Ah, indeed; you had better transfer your love to a woman who would appreciate it. I have no doubt your wife would be glad to embrace you and call you pet names!”

The face of the male specter became livid with rage, and he felt in his pocket as if in search of a weapon.

"Beware!" cried the female spook. "Attack me, and I would wring your neck as I would wring the neck of a pullet. If you have a dagger, be careful; you might fall down upon it and hurt yourself. If you have a pistol, it might explode. Children should not be allowed to carry deadly weapons."

"You are a she devil!" the male spook almost shrieked.

"There! there! do not get excited; to-day I found a letter on the lawn where you had been. It was one you had dropped accidentally. I learned from it that you have a wife and three small children in Nashville, Tennessee; that they are in indigent circumstances. Do you deny it?"

"I do not, but if you only knew how that woman treated me; how she ruined my peace of mind; destroyed every earthly hope, and made life a dismal, howling waste, you would not blame me for deserting her."

"Why did you not avail yourself of the opportunity to climb the golden stairway and take your place among the angels?"

"I was working for fame, and the children were troublesome and expensive."

"Fame is the bauble for which ambition seeks. All who toil for it complain at the expense. It isn't worth what it costs, especially if one has a family."

"It was necessary for my wife to engage in manual labor."

"The wives of most men who seek after fame with no show of success are compelled to support their families. She had no right to marry a man with a bee in his bonnet."

"Oh, how happy I would be if I could only call Frossie the sweet name, wife. What joy it would be."

"Poor fellow, I begin to sympathize with you. If you *must* have a wife, and were legally divorced, I do not know what *I* might be induced to do."

The male spook looked anxiously around for some means of escape, but rallied and said :

“ You do not understand me ; my life and happiness are in her keeping ; I can not live without her. She shall be mine ! ”

“ My dear friend, postpone the funeral as long as possible. ”

“ What do you mean ? Why do you jest ? ”

“ I do not jest. Not an hour ago I heard Rudolph Germain tell Frossie he could not live without her, and when two men can not live without the same girl, it follows that there will be a funeral. ”

“ She shall never marry Rudolph Germain. I have sworn it, and deep down in my soul I have registered a vow that she shall be my wife. If I fail to win her love, I shudder to think of the consequences. ”

“ Better not meddle with Rudolph Germain, or this love affair may reach a point where the second best man will get a cracked cranium and a few broken ribs. ”

“ I do not seek to harm him, but if I do not succeed in winning her, then I shall take my own life. Why should n't I ? Better death than life without her. One dagger stroke — a sharp pain — only for a moment, and then eternal sleep — sure narcotic for the numbing pain of a desolate life. ”

“ Why is it, ” said the female goblin, “ that a score of men will clamor for the same woman, when there are so many other women going to waste ? ”

“ It is useless to talk of other women to me. There is only one woman in the world. I have watched over her — dreamed of her by night, and worshipped her by day. I would have no thought but to make her happy were she mine, and Oh ! may the gods help me to woo her and gain her love, my own, my peerless Frossie. ” And he was weeping.

“ It's no use to cry over spilled milk ; your case is hopeless. You do not deserve her love, and Rudolph Germain has a prior claim. Now take my advice, and return to the

woman you have so basely deceived and wronged. Let your children lead you back to duty and into the paths of honor."

"What are the paths of honor but deserted highways, whereon who treads must walk alone? They are but thoroughfares of pain, and the world gives a man no credit for the pangs he suffers in doing his duty as an honest man, while the veriest rogue may aspire and attain a place high up in the affections of the people. It is only necessary for a man to wear good clothes and be of good address to pass as a gentleman in the most aristocratic circles."

"For instance, a dough-faced libertine, black-leg, and lightweight villain could array himself in a swallow-tail coat, white vest, tight-fitting pantaloons, patent leather boots, and manilla hat, swoop down upon the fold and bear away some sweet-faced girl. Nay, your logic is not sound. Thieves are opposed to laws prohibiting larceny; libertines are opposed to virtue, and all men are opposed to what interferes with their ideas of personal liberty and enjoyment. Enter the straight path; you have no right to judge other men by your own moral status."

"You have my secret, and I suppose I will be exposed and disgraced to-morrow in the eyes of the world, or at least in the eyes of this small bit of the earth."

"I do not wish to harm you. I have larger fish to fry. Go your way. I have no fears about Frossie. She can take care of herself; but remember that I know your true character, and if she could see you as you are, she would spurn you as she would an eel, and shrink from your touch as she would from the touch of a serpent; but —"

A something came whizzing through and over the shrubs, striking the male spook full in the breast. With a half-smothered oath he fell sprawling over the back of a cast-iron leopard, which crouched at the base of a marble Psyche, by the side of which he was standing.

The female specter dematerialized instantly. The swallow-tail specter vanished as he came. Euphrosyne, Thalia,

O'Leeds, and Germain had returned to the house and were enjoying themselves hilariously, but Zebulon and Aggie tarried in the wigwam for some time after the vanishing of the eavesdropping spook. This is what happened: On the previous day Frossie had purchased a small specimen of turtle, from a small boy, who had captured it in a stream close by, thinking it would be a valuable acquisition to the fish-pond, at the base of the fountain, in the wigwam. She placed it in the waters of the pond among the finny creatures therein. The turtle did not appear to appreciate prosperity, for he crawled out of the pond continually, and was a great source of trouble to the gentle Frossie. This evening he had made his escape, and settled himself serenely under the trysting-bench. I am inclined to think that it was a peaceably disposed animal, or would have been had Weiler not trespassed upon its rights. What right has any man to thrust his boot-heel scornfully against the nose-hole of a turtle's shell, and keep up an idiotic thumping and tramping against the shell-work tenement of an innocent, inoffensive mud-blossom, as did Mr. Zebulon Weiler? I answer, none at all. This turtle would not endure Mr. Weiler's familiarity, and snapped at the offensive heel, catching a mouthful of genuine, all-wool cassimere. Zebulon felt the shock, but it came during a season of osculatory refreshments, and he soon forgot all about it. By and by it was time to leave the wigwam, and then he was painfully aware that he was dragging a part of the wigwam after him. He moved very slowly and talked entertainingly lest his affianced should discover his predicament. He was not sure what he was dragging; it seemed to weigh a ton, and the great, soft, mushy fellow was too bashful to allow his lady to relieve him. He was a careful and prudent man, and to be snapped in the leg by some animal whose characteristics were unknown to him, and whose intentions were very uncertain, made him nervous. He took to the grass, in order to deaden the sound made in dragging

the beast, and perspired immoderately. They kept on walking and talking, and the beast clung all the tighter. He talked of the weather until the weather was exhausted, but the beast had evidently no intention of loosening its hold. He talked of the constellations, and told her how to calculate an eclipse of the sun; talked of the moon and stars, until Aggie was astonished at his knowledge of astronomy — and still the brute held fast. He talked of their approaching marriage in a way that should have caused the turtle to drop off, but it did not. All this time they had been winding in and out among the shrubbery, he being careful to keep under the shadows, and to keep his arm around her in such a manner that she would not be able to see the turtle.

Finally they were resting under the shadow of a magnificent white maple; great drops of perspiration stood on his brow, for he knew the truth would probably soon become apparent. Fortune favored him, however, for Aggie, discovering that she had left a valuable fan within the wigwam, excused herself abruptly and ran back to get it. Now was the time for action, and not being able to pry the thing loose, he concluded to kick it from him, and, being a powerful man, he gave a powerful impetus to the beast. It sailed majestically through the branches of maples, firs and junipers, and struck something, with a dull thud, away over in the dark distance. It was the swallow-tailed specter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEPARTURE.

Aunt Mehitable Stebbins, relict of the late Jared Stebbins, who gave up the ghost in a frantic effort to “corner” bread stuff, in the year of our Lord 18—, was considered a member of the Graydon family, she being Minerva’s only sister.

The soul of the departed Stebbins, if he had a soul, had never been troubled about the welfare of society, nor concerned about the misfortunes of his neighbors. "Money will purchase everything necessary to a man's happiness. Nature doles out just so much misery and happiness to the human race, and each man receives his *pro rata* share of it, according to his mental and physical make up. The more money the less misery, Mrs. Stebbins, and the less we spend the more we shall accumulate." Thus reasoned the man of whom we speak. He died, and I am heartily glad of it, for it is mete and proper that Providence should interfere in behalf of the people when such men are financiering the wealth of whole neighborhoods into their own coffers. Place a sponge in a basin full of water, in a short time the water is all gone. Place one of these able financiers in a neighborhood of honest, industrious fellow citizens, and in a short time you notice that the local money market is greatly depressed, and that the currency is contracted. The able financier has the money — has sucked it into his clutches in much the same way that a sponge takes water from a basin; but here the parallel stops, for, you may squeeze all the water from the sponge back into the basin, but you may squeeze the able financier until your nervous system is exhausted, and the currency is still contracted. If the lamented Stebbins enjoyed any of the bliss of this world, it was by absorbtion, for it is certain that he never bothered himself about things he could not monopolize, and which had no market value. He was a very practical man, almost too practical to die, but he did die — he really couldn't spare the time to draw his last breath, but he did just the same. I speak of this with a view of setting before the reader the good side of his character, and I solemnly assert that his death was the only generous act of his life — the only good thing he ever did for his kind. If he went to heaven, I'll wager any small specific sum that his first act was an effort to swindle Saint Peter out of the

gold knobs on the front door of the celestial city. His life was a dismal failure, his death a necessary and enjoyable calamity, on the occasion of which society drew a long breath of relief and forgot all about him. Devil take him.

Aunt Mehitable had not been a congenial spirit to Stebbins, but he cared little for that. She did what seemed her allotted duty, with no murmur or complaint. Her tongue, like her shadow, was loose at both ends, and a wonderful supply of soft and precious advice slipped away from her. In deeds of charity she was as indefatigable as a pendulum, and her open-heartedness was demonstrated in a thousand ways. She was afflicted with a chronic cough, and often declared that she had had the "hasty consumption for the last thirty years." She was a childless mother, or, rather, a motherly old soul without children; and with her loving disposition, demanding a surfeit of gentle affection, it is not strange that she became warmly attached to her nieces. She became a frequent visitor at the Graydon place at the demise of Stebbins, aforesaid, and her coming was always hailed with delight. Dear old Aunt Mehitable, though she had been crucified on a matrimonial cross, yet she came down from that cross purified and almost glorified in the eyes of her affectionate relatives. They loved her, not merely because she was wealthy, although her money did not lessen their esteem, nor in any way interfere with a full and free expression of their pleasure in her presence. The beautiful city of —— was the place selected by her in which to spend her declining days. She located there because of its superior church privileges, and because it was only a pleasant ways down the railroad to the Graydons. So we find her engaged in what should be the occupation of all wealthy old ladies, to-wit: Doing the will of her heavenly Father, and distributing her surplus to the necessities of the worthy poor and friendless.

The girls having decided to make a triple wedding, named September as a proper month for the completion of Love's

happy triangle. The question of their future residence was, to be sure, a matter of great moment. Nathaniel insisted that all of them should live with him; he was old, he said, and needed the sustaining presence of his daughters. Minerva merely quoted a few passages of Scripture, and referred the matter to the Lord. Terpsichore had not been consulted, but had some ideas about the matter, and one evening, when the entire family, including the bridegrooms, were chatting together in the drawing-room, Tiberius O'Leeds asked Terp to express her opinion about the propriety of all living together. With cool and cutting sarcasm she replied:

“All live together, to be sure; what a brilliant proposition. Three full-orbed honeymoons blazing down upon us continually. Could we endure it? Would not the saccharine qualities of the atmosphere be too oppressive for healthy respiration? Is true love like condensed milk, warranted to keep in any climate? If so, does it follow that who is not fond of milk shall be compelled to drink it? In plain English, are not the sweets of the honeymoon too obvious and tangible to be appreciated by any save the contracting parties? Seriously, I think this nectar-coated period of married life should be passed quietly, and the participants should be screened from public gaze, not for their own good, but for the good of the public. One of the imperative laws of married life is that the husband must finally acknowledge that there are a *great many* women in the world, and that he only possesses *one*, and not all of them; likewise the wife is compelled to admit that her husband is only *one* man. It might not interfere with your pleasure to congregate, permanently, in this house, for it is large and pleasant; but how about myself, my father, and Mrs. Graydon, who are not at all responsible for the present state of affairs? And then,” noticing the dismay of her three sisters, “just think of the children; only a few years and the house will be full of them, from cellar to garret. Children up stairs, children in the base-

ment, children in the parlors, sliding down the banisters, playing blind man's buff in the drawing-room, and" — but Aggie was crying, Frossie was angry, and Thalia was preparing to leave the room. The gentlemen were horrified, except O'Leeds, who laughed outright. They would listen no farther to Terp's discourse, and strolled out for a moonlight ramble.

Notwithstanding the vaporings of the terrible spinster, the wedding preparations began with commendable promptness and energy. It being the first time these girls had ever been to the point of getting married, there was an excusable redundancy of enthusiasm. It was decided without debate that the wedding garments should be purchased and manufactured at the city of —, which of necessity would cause them to make an immediate visit to dear old Aunt Mehitable's. This fashion, of purchasing clothing and household goods away from home; this cosmopolitan instinct that makes a man a citizen of the world and causes him to turn his back upon his native village, when he has money to spend, is not wholesome, nor is it in accordance with the American idea of citizenship. Yet it is practiced all over this country, not only in towns and villages, but also in cities. The blue-bloods of Cincinnati purchase bridal garments at Chicago; Chicago buys in New York City; New York City buys in London; London buys in Paris, and so forth. Had the girls concluded to purchase their bridal garments at home and consented to have them made by the family seamstress, in country style, I do not think this book would have been written, and the reader could have invested his money in English classics. I do not blame them much for not wanting the services of the family seamstress, for she was like the shoemaker our ancestors tell us about, who made boots and shoes for everybody over the same last. Her work was not satisfactory, and the girls never allowed her to tamper with their fine dresses. She was at the time engaged to be married to a

traveling bunion-puller. It was the event of her life, and her poor, weak brain was never capable of entertaining two ideas at the same time without some kind of a calamity. The idea of her manufacturing some other body's wedding dress with her hands, and her own wedding dress with her mushy brains, at one and the same time, was a thing which the girls did not dream of entrusting to her. There were a few excellent mantau-makers in town, but they were not considered. Custom shut the gown-makers and the merchants of their town from view when expensive articles of clothing were to be purchased. The third day of July was the date fixed for their visit to the city, and it being immediately at hand, preparations were made accordingly. The most elaborate part of said preparations was the coaxing of papa to give them a much larger sum of money for their purchases than he thought necessary, but they succeeded beyond their expectations, and very early after breakfast on the morning of the third of July, donned their traveling suits and appeared before their parents ready for departure.

Nathaniel was seated at a small table with his "Book of the House of Graydon" before him, and he read as follows :

"Barbara Allen, of the line of Eldridge, lived with her three beautiful daughters, Eudora, Deliah, and Irene, near Rabbit Ridge, Kentucky, in the early part of the present century. These daughters were fair to look upon and attracted the attention of three young frontiersmen, who became ardent admirers. By and by, on a cold winter's day, they were married at the residence of Esquire Mabley, and after the ceremony, started to return to Barbara Allen's humble dwelling, a distance of five miles. The good woman had not been able to attend the wedding, on account of having sprained her ankle in driving a drove of elm-peelers into the barn-yard. As she awaited the return of her children, and was listening for their footsteps and merry laughter, her ears caught a far different sound. She heard the most heart-rending cries from the depths of the wood, and presently the bridal party came in sight, and the men were bearing a burden which proved to be the inanimate form of Irene, the one she loved the best. The story was soon told : As the newly married were

coming through the wood, led by Irene and her husband, they came full upon three large bears, in coming around the roots of a fallen tree. Both Irene and her husband wore deer-skin moccasins, and their approach was almost noiseless. The startled bears, thinking they were attacked, sprung up, and one dealt Irene a fatal blow with his paw. Barbara Allen never recovered from the shock, and died in one year's time with a broken heart."

"This, my daughters, reads like a precedent."

"Oh, not much of a one, papa," cried Frossie; "where's the woods?"

"And the 'squire and the widow's cottage?" said Thalia.

"And the elm-peelers, and the bears?" added Aggie.

"Here's your bears," cried Terp, admitting Germain, Weiler, and O'Leeds. "A polar, a grizzly, and a cinnamon."

After the usual greetings, Weiler announced that it was "about train time."

"My daughters," said Minerva, just as they were preparing to leave, "and my sons, to be, may the Spirit of the Lord be with thee and keep thee in perfect peace. May your married life be as pleasant as mine has been. Learn to bear and forbear with one another's weaknesses, for you are all frail creatures. As Paul said: 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' Yes, my daughters, obey thy husbands in every right and proper thing. But never learn to do wrong gracefully and submissively, as do so many wives; retain your womanhood under all circumstances and at any price. You remember that once a great king made a magnificent feast and festival to the people of his kingdom, and revealed the riches and splendor of his realm to his nobles and princes. In the splendid court of the king's garden, with its hangings of white and blue and green curtains, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble; where couches of silver and gold were spread, for the repose of the company, upon pavements of red, and blue, and

white, and black marble, and rarest wines were served in golden goblets, the king and his people made merry. By and by, when the king was inflamed with wine, he sent for the queen, requesting her presence immediately. But mark you, the noble-minded Vashti did not appear, nor choose to reveal her charms to the gaze of drunken men, and although she loved her lord and king, she would rather be a beggar than lower her standard of virtuous propriety. She was dethroned and cast adrift, and no doubt the princes and nobles of Persia and Media treated her most shamefully, but she retained her womanhood pure and untainted, which is of more value than the fleeting treasures of this world. Honor your husbands, my daughters, but honor first thy God and Master. If thy husband prove to be as wicked as Haman, it does not follow that thou shouldst be as cruel as Zeresh. Does it, Mr. Weiler?"

Zebulon, who was calculating the cost of Aggie's jaunty hat and traveling suit, was startled and bewildered at the abruptness of the question, and mumbled in a sort of idiotic way that he was "a little rusty on Scripture, and did n't know whether it did or not."

"Ah, Mr. Weiler," said terrible Terp, "you always try to deceive us. When we ask you about Scripture, or painting, or music, you feign the most profound ignorance, but you can, at all times, give us the most reliable statistics on the manufacture and sale of cream cheese and Jersey butter. In all discussions of art and literature you strive to impress us with the idea that your head is made of leather, but without pressing, you have often given us long talks on political economy. Ah, Mr. Weiler, confess it, sir: you are simply deceiving us, and beneath your deceptive exterior lies a wealth of high culture and artistic attainment, which you allow to remain hidden that you may, some day when we least expect it, make an astounding display of your mental prowess."

Now Terp hated Weiler most cordially, and never allowed

an opportunity to puncture his dignity to escape. As she finished, he was rubbing his pudgy hands together in a helpless sort of way, and his face was as red as a lobster. O'Leeds laughed outright in spite of his efforts at self-control.

"To be sure, this is a solemn occasion," continued hateful Terp. "Father and Mrs. Graydon are about to lose three daughters by marriage, but notwithstanding this, the train will arrive in a short time, and if we are not at the depot at the proper time, our visit will have to be postponed until after the fourth of July."

"My precious mamma!" and Thalia was rapturously embracing her mother.

"My darling," said Nathaniel; and Frossie was in her father's arms. "Oh, may the gods protect thee and keep thee from all harm."

Oh, Nathaniel, why did you not hold her in your arms forever? What was it that crossed your mind as you held her close-folded to your bosom? Ah, your household was under the shadow of impending doom, and a vague presentiment of evil caused you to press her closer and kiss her with unusual tenderness.

"My own daughters," said Minerva, kissing Aggie, "you are each of you as noble as Vashti."

"And as supremely beautiful, devoted, and self-sacrificing as Queen Esther," cried Germain, who was in love with his prospective mother-in-law and greatly impressed by her unselfish devotion and love for her daughters.

"Even so, and may they ever be kept close to the bleeding side of the one 'who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.'"

In a moment they were gone, and a dark presence stood beside Minerva—an evil presence which she could neither understand nor push away. At the same time the addled

seamstress, in an adjoining room, was combing her coarse, red hair, and in a vigorous endeavor to disentangle herself from the visionary embrace of the bunion doctor, broke her comb into several pieces. "Bad luck's a comin' sure. I never knew the sign to fail," she said, superstitiously eyeing the broken comb. "If it be a comin' to me, then I hope it didn't was; if it be on this 'ouse, may the good Lord pre-sarve 'em."

Terpsichore accompanied her sisters as a kind of a guardian angel, although she was not invited to do so. The gentlemen accompanied them only as far as the depot, and, as the train was arriving, the lovers had small opportunity for conversation. As Germain assisted Frossie to mount the steps of the car, he whispered: "My life, my love," and she answered gaily in return, "Yours, forever and forever." These words burned in Germain's soul to his dying day. That was all, and they went whirling away.

What was it that caused the gentlemen to pause and gaze anxiously after the receding train until it was almost lost to view? Was it a premonition of coming danger? Perhaps it was.

Aunt Mehitable had been informed that the girls were coming; that they would dine at the Grand Hotel, and be with her in the evening after they had finished their shopping, for they agreed that their purchases must be made on the third, or they must wait until the fifth, on account of the Fourth of July demonstrations. You must remember that they were young and very eager to inspect the material for their bridal dresses and *trousseaux*, just as all girls are apt to be. Their traveling bags were taken immediately to Aunt Mehitable's.

At the hotel they were "at home," having stopped there many times before, and as they had ample time to adjust themselves and rest before dining, they improved the opportunity.

Terp, in her eagerness to test her pet theories about "equalizing the chances," made a fool of herself, as usual.

Of course she had to do for herself; nature had not been kind to her, in the way of beauty and brains; or rather nature had not developed her faculties evenly or correctly. Therefore, I do not blame her for what she could not help. She wanted a husband, and how could she know who wanted her, or who did not want her, unless she asked them? This looks reasonable, and then, you know, quite often there is as "much pleasure in the pursuit as in the possession" of a thing. If she could not bag the game, she, at least, had the privilege of giving chase; of encountering the perils and enjoying the felicities of the pursuit. Husband-hunting is much like driving fox. Sometimes eligible gentlemen may seem scarce, but beat the bushes and you may find the woods full of them. To be sure you do not pen them up in a small circle to secure them and shake them by the tail to keep them from biting you. But the excitement of the chase is about the same, whether the game be a husband or a fox. At home Terp had recently found a new object for target practice in the person of Judge Chatterton, a bald-headed old sinner, who, since the death of his wife, had been guilty of flirting and making eyes at almost every girl and unmarried woman he met. Terp was aware that he was in the city to enjoy the Fourth of July festivities, but I do not insinuate that this knowledge caused her to make her visit at the same time and stop at the same hotel. Far be it from me to make any unfair or unjust accusation against a poor, lone female, who is obliged to do for herself in this vile world. I merely give the facts, without making any deductions or drawing any conclusions. About a week previous the Judge had made some advances which were as follows: They met on the sidewalk, and the Judge politely lifted his silk tile, and said in that soft, gentle tone that all judges have, who are bald-headed: "Good morning, Miss Graydon," at the same

time inverting his optics in a way that said plainly to her, "I admire you, but am afraid to say so." Was Terp to blame because Judge Chatterton's eyes talked to her mental faculties in that way? She was a lone woman, struggling to establish a great reform; and a woman with an idea is like a man with a grievance, sure to be heard from. On the arrival of the sisters at the Grand Hotel, they encountered the Judge, who bowed profoundly and chatted with them a few moments, after which he walked away. Half an hour after this, Terp peered into the parlor, up stairs, and there was Judge Chatterton, sitting alone in a large chair, and almost in the dark, the blinds being closed. His head was thrown slightly back, and she thought him sleeping, as she entered the room softly, with many a smile and many a smirk, and with an eye to business. She intended to pull his whiskers gently to awaken him, then place her hand playfully over his eyes, in genuine school-girl fashion, for a moment, and, in a refined way, to draw him to the subject of matrimony; if practicable she would "equalize the chances," that is to say, "pop." I suppose that many a bald-headed sinner has been caught by many a lone female in much the same way.

But the plan did not work. When Terp placed her hand upon his brow she started back with a shriek. The brow was icy cold, and it was not Judge Chatterton after all, although there was a strange resemblance. Almost immediately a well-dressed and polite colored girl appeared at the door.

"Laws, missus! do n't be skeered."

"But the man insulted me."

"Fo' de Lawd, missus, de gemmen couldn't hut you, he's daid!"

"I do n't mean to say that he actually insulted me," cried the much excited spinster, "but he would if he had been alive, I know he would. He looks just like it. What right have the proprietors of this hotel to allow dead men in the ladies' parlor? Why do n't they put him on ice?"

Explanations followed. Deceased was Mr. E. P. Bradley, of Galveston, Texas, who had died suddenly in his room that morning. His remains were placed in the parlor, and a relative, who wanted a photograph before he was embalmed, had him made as life-like as possible, and placed by the side of the large plate-glass window. A photographer had succeeded in getting a picture, similar to the deceased, and the colored attendant was instructed to watch until the arrival of the undertaker, and to prevent any one from entering the room. For a short time she had left her post of duty, and during the interval of her absence Terpsichore arrived.

The spinster, in her excitement, did not consider that the colored girl knew actually nothing at all of what had happened, or what her intentions had been, but supposed that, unless something was done to prevent, she would be openly disgraced, and become a laughing stock for the good people of the hotel. Ah, Terp! "Conscience makes cowards of us all." She gave the girl a one-dollar greenback, and begged her not to "tell." The misty maid of Zululand, not knowing anything to tell, willingly agreed not to tell it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLIGHT.

The girls were fully posted, and knew the kinds of material they were going to purchase, and the "styles" into which it was to be manufactured. This was a great advantage to themselves and to the merchants. During the afternoon they purchased and were "measured" for their bridal dresses. After making some other purchases they decided to repair to Aunt Mehitable's, and finish their shopping on the morrow.

Good dame Mehitable received them with open arms, reciting the warmest words of welcome in her usual ecstatic

manner, pausing occasionally long enough to cough and kiss them. Dear old creature, how she loved those bright girls. No mother was ever so proud of her daughters.

“So, you’ve come to see your old aunt again, have you? Well, that’s right; you belong to me, and ought to be ashamed not to come oftener when you live so near,” and the old lady squeezed and tugged away at each one until thoroughly exhausted.

After a lengthy visit to the wash-room, a complete change of clothing, a short rest, and a light repast, the party assembled on the lawn, seating themselves on rustic benches and chairs, and, as Terp said, “Trying to get a breath of fresh air.”

“Been buying your wedding dresses, young ladies, have you?” said Aunt Mehitable.

“Yes, aunt, and they are beauties,” said Aggie.

“Well, now, just tell me what they are like. I am anxious to know what my girls are to wear on the most important occasion of their lives.”

“Well, aunt,” continued Aggie, “mine will be made of extra fine, white nun’s veiling, the skirt trimmed with a large number of plaited ruffles, each ornamented with loops and ends of white satin ribbon. Tunic short, and caught back to the train on the right side by loops and ends of satin ribbon, and on the left side by a large bunch of orange flowers. The train is long, plain, and lined with white silk; the waist high, with shawl plaitings from the shoulders, and a bunch of orange blossoms high up on the right side. The veil long, and of tulle. The gentleman who made the measurements advised me to have the dress cut very low in the neck, and wear no sleeves, but, aunt, I could n’t endure the proposition.”

“Bless my soul, child, you have n’t been fooling around one of those man milliner shops, have you? Of course you would get such advice there, but my opinion is that a woman

might just as well appear with bare legs as bare arms and naked bosom. Oh, how disgusting such women are in my eyes! But you said you scorned the proposition, just like the dear, sweet child that you are," said Aunt Mehitable, imprinting a kiss on Aggie's lips, which looked as if they were about ready to pout. Thalia laughed merrily at her aunt's vigorous way of expressing her disapprobation, and said:

"Oh, you know, aunt, we did not buy our dresses by the yard, and the man simply wanted to save material by leaving out almost the entire upper part. But we were shrewd enough to get our money's worth of the goods. I think mine will be entirely too lovely for a country girl, although it will possibly not be made in the latest style. The bodice and train will be a rich cream-colored satin brocade, embroidered with lilies of the valley and roses; the train is lined with salmon pink satin duchesse, with border of same material, surmounted by a garland of full blown roses of the same shades of pink and cream color. The petticoat of salmon-pink satin duchesse, almost covered with point lace, the lace drooped with bouquets of roses. And just think, Aunt, we got them for a song."

"Yes," said Terp, "but father will have to make some notes above the staff, and his real estate will be embroidered with blossoms if you girls ever get married again."

"Never mind, Terp," cried Frossie, "when you get married you shall have finer garments than we are purchasing. Only hurry up or you will have that benevolent old gentleman who rambles around with a scythe hung over his shoulder for a lover, and when Father Time pops the question you will be compelled to give him an affirmative answer."

"Indeed," said Terp, "I am deeply grateful for your advice. If all mundane resources fail I will marry the man in the moon, but I know Aunt wants to hear about your dress, although such talk is not as bracing as the breath of a blizzard in such a sweltering atmosphere."

“Well,” spiritedly, “my dress is a beauty, if I do say it myself. It is of pale blue brocade, embossed with roses, blue bells, and white flowers, trimmed with silver jupe of palest blue antique satin, veiled in fine lace; train lined in the pale satin, trimmed with silver and covered with lace, and I shall wear a plume and veil, and carry a bouquet of roses in my hand.”

“And oh, how sweet will be our Frossie!” said Thalia, enthusiastically.

“She is the fairest among ten thousand,” said Aunt Mehitable.

“And the one altogether lovely,” added the black-eyed beauty.

“Your flattery will turn my poor head wrongwise,” cried the blushing blonde. “Now let us decide the style for our everyday dresses; you know, Aunt, we have agreed to have the cut just alike. I think satin-finished silk is handsome, and think the prettiest design is the last one we looked at, you know, girls. The skirt is of right size round, and four-gored, with six panels on the gores, three at each side, folded double lengthwise, and fixed to overlap each other at each side, producing the effect of two broad triple-plaited panels, in V shape from the center to the front gore. The exposed portion of the front gore is covered with bead *passanterie*, and upon the panels nearest the back is a row of similar *passanterie*. The back drapery is an ample breadth, that is draped in full, loose puffs at the top and falls in broad kilt plaits below. The top is turned under deeply, and two upward-running plaits are close to the fold in each front edge, the drapery being inserted in the side seams of the body below the waist lines and caught together underneath to a cluster of plaits that is laid near the top at the center and tacked to the center seam on the outside. A deep loop formed high up in each side edge, tackings at each side to the body, and tackings made to the skirt at the tops of the kilt plaits, com-

plete the draping; the puffs drooping over the tops of the kilt plaits, and the drapery falling even with the edge of the skirt. The body is a neat-fitting basque, slightly pointed at the end of the closing, arches prettily over the hips. A curving center seam, side, and under arm gores and double bust darts make the adjustment; and along the lower edges to the side seams is a row of *passamenterie* which is carried up the front at each side, at the closing in vest outline, and across the back below a high standing collar. A row of *passamenterie* encircles the coat sleeves a little above the wrist edge, completing them in harmony with the rest of the basque. Any style of *lingerie* may be worn."

"Dear heart," cried Aunt Mehitable, with visible amazement, "you don't mean to say that all them crooks and maneuvers belong to one dress? Why, Frossie, they would draw you all out of shape. And to think of the shameless extravagance, the reckless waste of money; such a vain display, when one-half the human race can scarcely afford a change of clothing, or a sufficient amount of plain food. You ought to be ashamed, my dears, to be so thoughtless."

"Quite right," said Terp, "but is it not customary with the human race to make extravagant weddings and costly funerals, among the poor as well as the rich? Strange that in the three most important events of life we have no power to resist the custom of the people — in the cradle we suck our thumbs and spill our milk; at the altar we would mortgage our future for wedding finery; and in death we would that our friends spend enough money at our funeral to endow an almshouse. It's the same among savage or civilized nations."

"Only," said Thalia, "some never get the chance."

Terpsichore did not exactly understand Thalia's meaning.

"Do not allow any clouds to darken your sunshine," continued consistent Aunt Mehitable. "You will probably be married but once in a lifetime, and, as you have plenty of money, why should n't you have extravagant wedding gowns?"

I am sure my pocketbook is at your disposal, and there is plenty in it, too. It is mine, and if it be the righteous will of God I shall leave nothing for the bailiffs to quarrel over. God and my daughters and the poor shall have it all."

So the evening wore away pleasantly, if not profitably.

The Fourth of July was ushered in with a blare of trumpets, a terrific explosion of cannon, crackers, and other munitions of peace. Young America will insist on celebrating the Declaration of Independence and satirizing the efforts of old King George at governing the American people until time shall be no more. Who would have it otherwise? Our independence, like salvation, "was bought with a price." We not only have a prime article of freedom and patriotism, but entirely too much of it. However, we have none for sale. This superabundance of patriotism works out through natural channels—the pores of loyal Americans—on the Fourth of July, which is the great safety-valve of the republic.

The city, on this particular morning, was early in an uproar, which continued during the day with vigorous loyalty. Notwithstanding the noise and confusion incident to such a celebration, our girls found opportunities to complete their purchases. Late in the afternoon they met, on one of the crowded thoroughfares, Mr. Paul Satalia, their former instructor in music, who, from some cause unknown, had not been visible to sight or sense around the Graydon mansion for many days. He was all smiles, and executed a large number of fashionable contortions, notwithstanding the crowded condition of the street.

"Dear Mr. Satalia," cried Terp, "you are quite a stranger! The girls had forgotten all about you in their eagerness to complete arrangements for their approaching nuptials. Frossie, especially, has forgotten every man in the world except Germain."

For a moment the fires of a fierce hatred burned in his eyes, and traces of the hyena were visible on his counten-

ance, but only for a moment; then he was as calm and urbane as usual. Of course he was invited to call that evening for a social chat, and he arrived at an early hour after tea. To his consternation, Aunt Mehitable announced that she had purchased tickets for the entire party to an entertainment, to be given under the auspices of the Ladies' "Relief Society," at the Grand Opera House.

"What is the nature of the entertainment?" queried Thalia.

"This play will be given for the benefit of the poor, and the proceeds will be used next winter when the poor of our city suffer the most. The entertainment will be strictly by home talent, and is the old favorite, Uncle Tom's Cabin."

"Oh, horrors!" ejaculated Frossie, who had been engaged in a confidential conversation with Satalia at the other end of the room. "Dear aunt, I have suffered enough for one day. Do not compel me to listen to an amateur 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' troupe. My poor nerves are not strong enough to endure it. The balance of my life would be tortured by visions of disconsolate Uncle Toms, overgrown Topsyies, spiritualized Evas, in muslin wraps, who constantly forget their lines; funny Marks, who drink brandy and water behind the scenes, and stick pins in the bull dogs to make them howl. No, dear aunt, you must excuse me; Mr. Satalia wants me to go with him to the bridge and witness the fire works, and I have consented to go."

Of course she was excused. Before entering Aunt Mehitable's private carriage, which conveyed them up town, Thalia twined her arms around Frossie and imprinted a warm kiss on the dear lips of her they loved so well. Her example was contagious, and Aggie and Aunt Mehitable followed it. Mr. Satalia looked as if he would enjoy the osculatory act himself, but refrained with becoming dignity.

"Mr. Satalia," said Aggie, "take good care of sister, and return her as soon as she is weary; the poor child has walked

a great deal to-day, and should not be out long in the night air, especially as it looks as if it would rain, and the atmosphere may become heavy and damp."

Sweet Thalia and Aggie, what made you so tenderly attentive to Frossie on that occasion? To be sure, you were always tender and attentive, and always loved Frossie more than any other being upon this earth; to be sure you worshipped her, and your lives were so closely welded and linked together that you were as three in one—the triune God of a happy home, but these were, perhaps, not the only reasons why you pressed her so tenderly and kissed her so passionately. Did you notice that Frossie was enamored of Satalia, and seemed submissively fascinating to him! Perhaps you did, but I think not. It was the shadow of calamity that fell about you, and the same dark presence that stood by Minerva's side was with you, and, like her, you could neither understand it nor push it away.

According to arrangements, Thalia, Aggie, and Terp were landed at the opera house, Paul and Frossie at the suspension bridge. The last named were the first to leave the house, the carriage returning for the others. From the great piers of the bridge and from thousands of other sources up and down the river, gas jets were arranged to give a brilliant and even dazzling effect to the scene. The night was quite dark, and the sky was overhung with clouds.

At an early hour the bridge was crowded by a throng of ladies, gentlemen, and children, who listened, with rapt attention to the rendition of Wagner's "Tannhäuser," by Gilmore's great band, which was floating in the Ohio river beneath them, on the beautiful steamer "White Wings." I say the music was listened to with rapt attention. I will modify this statement by saying that the "rapt attention" was confined to a portion of the great crowd, for the river was so wide that only a portion of the number in attendance could hear distinctly and appreciate the music. What was

true of the "overture" was true of the other music furnished on that occasion. Paul and Frossie were near the center of the bridge, and were in excellent position to hear and see the performance given on that side. As the reader is only interested in their convenience and welfare, it is of small importance whether the balance of the crowd could hear and see or not. The "overture" was followed by a terrific and spontaneous volley of sky-rockets and other terrestrial explosives, during which the New Orleans Gold Band, on the steamer "Albatross," played the "Star Spangled Banner" in splendid style. On each side of the bridge was a commodious walk for foot travel; in the center was a large driveway for vehicles, etc., which was separated from the foot-walks by iron railing or braces. Paul and Frossie were on the foot-path, close to the iron bars that separated them from the driveway, gazing on the brilliant scene down the river. The illuminated waters of the Ohio; the great, blazing steamboats and other vessels; the myriads of Chinese lanterns, on shore and on the steamers; the wonderful music, all combined to arouse the spirits of the vast crowd to fever heat. At the beginning of the performance the driveway of the bridge was unobstructed, the police not allowing foot passengers thereon, but the force of a good-natured crowd caused the police to relent, and it was soon thronged with people.

Being somewhat in the shadow, Paul's right arm twined around Frossie's waist. She struggled with ill-concealed displeasure, but the crowd was dense, and she finally seemed to become reconciled to the situation, allowing his arm to remain there, although she knew it was not right for him to take such liberty with her person in the absence of her promised husband.

Once he stooped and whispered in his passionate, Southern way, "I love you!"

She made a frantic effort to disengage herself, but did not succeed. Poor girl, she was so young.

“You are my only hope; reject me, and I die; love me, and the world is better than heaven. To see you the wife of another would freeze the blood in my veins; to give you up would break my heart.”

As he spoke the words his face was very close, and she felt that he was wooing her away from the path of propriety, at least. He seemed never so handsome, with his faultless swallow-tail, and spotless white vest; his voice seemed never so musical and sweet. Poor lamb, gentle and loving, and the world is full of wolves.

“The Georgia Jubilee singers,” on board the “Yellow Rose” steamer, now filled the air with their wonderful melody. They sang, “My country, ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty.” The crowd was completely carried away by the song, and gave vent to their feelings in loud and prolonged cheering.

“Darling, no man ever loved a woman as I love you. Not an hour passes without bringing your bright, beautiful face to me. The current of my being is centered in you. There is no life without you, for all the brightness of the world had fled until you came to me. Fly with me! be my wife, and with you by my side I could face a frowning world and laugh at calamity. My precious darling! my own sweet love!”

Low and musical were the words, and the passionate eyes were burning into her soul. Poor girl! sweet lamb; why did she not think of her happy home and loving friends? Had she done so she would not have allowed him to speak of love.

“Sweet heart, come with me! After a while a carriage will await us on the Kentucky side of the river. A friend will convey us to a place where all pursuit would be useless. We could be married quietly, travel extensively, and by and by return to your friends, who would become reconciled. With my violin and your splendid voice we could gain the admiration of the public. Come, love! come!”

Poor child, just away from mother's heart and father's strong arms, and to be so tempted.

A bugle sounded the call for silence, and the fierce display of fireworks was suspended for a few moments.

A member of the Georgia minstrel troupe, with a powerful and melodious voice, sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" from the deck of the "Yellow Rose," and the entire troupe joined in the chorus of "Glory, Hallelujah!" Some one on the bridge caught up the strain, and it was an infectious example for the vast throng on the bridge, and up and down the river, on the Ohio side and on the Kentucky side. Thousands joined in the mighty chorus, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!" and, when it was finished, men and women and children were weeping. Paul Satalia was still talking of love, unmindful of a tall, Roman-visaged female, who stood behind him, within arm's reach, on the driveway, separated from them by the iron bars.

The fireworks continued, and the very heavens were shaken by the explosion of cannon, rockets, and other explosives. From the "White Wings" steamer Gilmore's Band gave the assemblage the grand "Rhapsodie Hongroise," by Liszt, in a most charming way.

The fireworks continued, and Satalia still whispered his love to the flexible heart and brain of the girl. Poor child! she was so young.

Suddenly there was a great hissing, and a tremendous bit of fiery blending of colors and fizzing, that finally developed into a great arch across the Ohio end of the bridge, higher than the piers; and clearly outlined against the sky were the words, in living letters of fire, "Our native land forever." Almost instantly the same sounds occurred on the opposite side of the bridge, with similar results, except that the arch read, "Home, Sweet Home."

The New Orleans Gold Band played "Hail, Columbia!" and Satalia whispered his love in passionate tones with all

the eagerness of his fiery nature. How could she resist his eloquent pleadings? She was only human; a pure, white blossom that had never been exposed to any atmosphere other than the soft airs of home life. Immaculate within herself, and strong in conscious virtue, she had learned to love those with whom she associated. The subtle villain had long ago won her respect and esteem. She trusted him because she thought him worthy and honorable; and his knowledge and love for music was a bond of strength between them. Congenial spirits are "birds of a feather," and while Frossie could readily discern his genius and good qualities, she failed altogether to recognize the faults of his character, so plain to Terp. Do not blame her too hastily for allowing him to take such liberties with her in a public place. Remember that they were unnoticed, except by the eagle eyes behind them. He was a friend to the family, and had a better right to place his arm around her than had he been a total stranger. Such has been the custom among damsels and lads of every age since the world began, and when Gabriel blows his trumpet, and the heavens are "rolled together as a scroll," I suppose the majority of the young men will be found with their good right arms around the waists of the young feminine majority.

It is the lovely, trusting girls who attract the attention of libertines and villains, and are more exposed and tempted than girls not so well favored. Correct home influences rise up and around them, and tower above them like stone walls; sometimes a wolf breaks into the fold, but as the supply of lambs is much greater than the supply of wolves, in civilized countries, society is reasonably safe.

Satalia was intoxicated by her dazzling beauty, and stung by the knowledge that she would soon drift away from him, where he could not follow, was almost insane with the idea of securing her by fair means, if possible; if not, then otherwise.

The program was lengthy, and the hour was late. Something happened that brought the celebration to a premature

close. It was a thunder storm (if thunder storms happen). A low rumble and a few rain drops caused the people to notice the black clouds that had risen apace. Soon sharper peals of thunder rent the air, vivid flashes of lightning laid the pyrotechnical triumphs of the hour completely in the shade; and heaven's artillery made the people forget the pop-gun magnitude of the cannon sky rockets. Almost instantly rain began to fall in torrents. Steamers skurried to safe quarters, the lights along the river went out, and the crowd on the bridge was in about the same condition as Napoleon's army after Blucher's charge on the field of Waterloo. One man tried to leap the strand of suspension wires into the Ohio River, and he was a man with a family at that, for no earthly reason, except that he wanted to go some place in a hurry. The crowd was visibly diminished within a few moments, and in a short time the great bridge was deserted, apparently, by all save Frossie, Satalia, and the gaunt female in the driveway. The storm was now appallingly terrific; the rain descended in a deluge, and the mighty river beneath their feet roared in sullen tones, but above its voice came, to the ears of the gaunt female, the voice of Satalia: "Mine, mine, forever mine!"

A terrible peal of thunder drowned Frossie's voice, if she answered, and, in the vivid flash of lightning that followed, the spectral female on the main thoroughfare saw Frossie and Satalia running towards the Kentucky shore. She followed them quickly.

CHAPTER IX.

IN SEARCH OF A CAB AND TWO WHITE HORSES.

Aggie and Thalia were not interested in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and voted it a dismal failure. Having ordered the carriage for half-past nine, they were prepared to and did

leave the house before the play was half finished. I give these facts for two reasons: First, to show you that they were acquainted with the merits of the play, having witnessed its execution many times. Secondly, I wish to impress upon your minds, as emphatically as possible, that they were ladies of refinement, and could not appreciate the awful detail of the drama when given by incompetent actors. But for sweet charity's sake they were willing to endure a little while what their nerves were not strong enough to endure for an entire evening. I hope, furthermore, by these plain statements of fact, to elevate them in your estimate of their characters.

At a moderately early hour they were again at Aunt Mehitable's, merrily discussing the miserable play, and surmising about the moral effect on the public if the dismal affair were taken from the boards and the good people of this country allowed a little time for rest and recreation.

"Uncle Tom has been a successful missionary for many long years, and his age and mission entitle him to respect," said Aunt Mehitable, warmly, in defense of the play.

"True, my dear aunt," Thalia replied; "but is it not time to place him on the superannuated list? All worn-out missionaries are bores. The mission of the play is ended; its work is accomplished. An exhausted drama is like an aged widower after a young girl for a wife: he fails to attract her favorable attention, and wonders why he is not as acceptable as in former years, but the reasons are patent, nevertheless."

"And, oh, Aunt!" cried Aggie, fervently; "is not the *morale* of society at stake, on the stage as well as in the pulpit? Is 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' proper food for our better selves? Is it a source of refinement, or even correct sentiment? The troupes that exhibit in small places are not so good as those which exhibit in cities, but are usually composed of a lot of roustabout darkies for jubilee singers; a dilapidated individual for Marks, who always gets drunk

before he leaves town; a Phineas who looks more like a keno expert than a Quaker; a thirty-year-old Topsy with big legs, dressed in a decollette coffee-sack and black silk stockings; a donkey which looks as if it had lost its pedigree in a struggle for a livelihood; and all of the troupe as untidy as possible. Is it right to sustain and encourage a drama that no longer has a legitimate object? If the public demands unwholesome things, is that a good reason why the unwholesome should be supplied? As the people do not longer demand 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' I think it an evidence of improvement and refinement. Mercy, what was that?"

That was thunder and lightning, and plenty of it. The hour was quite late, and the girls had prepared to retire for the night, but in another moment the storm was raging violently, and they concluded to wait awhile. They had forgotten all about the unpropitious aspect of the weather, and were thoroughly alarmed at the sudden crash of elements. Why did not Frossie return?

Terpsichore had left them at the entrance of the opera house, saying that she preferred witnessing the display of fire works at the bridge to wasting time at a "nigger show." Ostensibly she did, but in fact she felt anxious about Frossie, knowing, as she did, that Satalia had sworn to win her by fair or foul means. She had never revealed to any one her knowledge of Satalia, believing that Frossie was secure from all harm, and that Paul's railings were meaningless chatter and should be treated with silent contempt. However, she knew him to be unscrupulous, even desperate, in his weak way, and determined to follow them and see what she could discover. She was the grim-visaged female with eagle eyes, mentioned recently. It was some consolation for the sisters to think that possibly Terp was with Frossie. In fact, her absence made it quite probable that the entire party were waiting for the storm to abate. The carriage had been sent at ten o'clock, and it was to remain at a designated spot until

called for by Paul and Frossie. The storm did not abate, however, for a long time, which seemed an age to the frightened girls, but it did finally compromise and subside to a drizzle, and the drizzle did subside to a perfect calm without moisture. At twelve the carriage returned with no occupant except the driver, who said he had not been able to find either of the three missing ones, and that probably they were at some hotel, as all public houses near the river were full of people who had gone there to escape the violence of the storm. Should he return and search for them or not? Aunt Mehitable ordered him to return at once and make a thorough search.

At about half-past one o'clock A. M. a weather-beaten female stood in Aunt Mehitable's parlor gasping for breath, and presenting the appearance of a damaged advocate of signal service reform; or a battered piece of flotsam, washed ashore in a gale, with her garments clinging like cerements; wild, haggard, and terrifically terrible to the naked eye.

"They are gone!" almost shrieked the drabbed spinster. "Paul Satalia and Frossie have eloped. I followed them, but could not prevent it; they have escaped! Can you not understand it? Frossie has been playing a double game. She loved Satalia the best, and has fled with him. I overheard them plotting on the bridge when they did not dream I was near. I heard him declare his love; saw them billing and cooing, and carrying on in a shameless way—hugging and kissing each other in a crowd of thousands."

"It's false!" screamed Thalia, thoroughly aroused. "Frossie is true and noble and above deception. Your words are not true. She never loved Paul Satalia, nor would she elope with any man, even if she did love him!"

"I speak only the truth," said Terp. "I would that it were otherwise, for it will ruin father. They were the last ones to leave the bridge. I followed them to the Kentucky side, and there, according to the arrangement, of which I

heard him speak, was a cab hitched to a couple of white horses, awaiting to convey them to some place of safety. I saw them enter the cab and drive swiftly away."

"Could you not have been mistaken?" said Aunt Mehit-able, who was almost heart-broken by the news. She thought she had noticed an unbecoming sociability between Frossie and Satalia. Strange that one never remembers such things until after it is too late.

"I am not mistaken," said the antiquated female, and she related in minute detail the facts already known to the reader, embellishing and magnifying to suit herself. When her story was finished this water-soaked creature was aware of the fact that she had become a prominent factor in the "House of Graydon." She felt a slight tremor as she thought of her temporary importance and transitory greatness. To be, for once in her lifetime, the center of attraction gave her long continued twitchings of bliss, and to retain her seat on this high pedestal of personal enjoyment, she found it necessary to prevaricate to an unlimited extent. She could not understand why anyone should be condemned for eloping. She was ready to elope with anyone so inclined on short notice, for elopement meant marriage, and marriage was the goal toward which she was drifting (in her mind).

Aggie was weeping bitterly, and Thalia was by her side striving to comfort her by sympathetic threats of hysterics. In this, the darkest hour of their lives, they were very close to each other. "Into each life some rain must fall"; swift calamity, or sudden death, are all the more terrible on account of their swiftness, sometimes. A plodding doom is sometimes better than immediate destruction. They could not realize the full weight and strength of their misfortune; they could not fully understand that their darling Frossie had, in a moment of weakness, embraced a life of shame and wretchedness, and that they were, in a single moment, separated perhaps forever. Nor did they believe any such base-

ness of their sister, but they were conscious that something terrible had happened. They knew that sin and uncleanness were in the world, but were not acquainted with it by personal contact; they knew that Frossie had an impulsive nature, and was easily persuaded on account of the warmth of her affections; but they did not believe that she could be led astray by the sophistries of a deluded music teacher. Alas, poor children! their idol of clay had been broken; their altars rudely overturned, and their mouths were in the dust. Aunt Mehitable, bless her, was the only one who did anything practical, and it required some time for her to determine a plan of action. Finally, she sent for a policeman, to whom Terp related her story, omitting nothing, and adding much. The official was quite particular about obtaining a full description of the cab with white horses, into which, the spinster said, the couple had entered and were driven rapidly away. Detectives were sent out immediately by the chief of police, and, by daylight, Nathaniel and Minerva Graydon, Rudolph Germain, Tiberius O'Leeds, and Zebulon Weiler were in receipt of telegrams calling them immediately to the city. By noon all were at Aunt Mehitable's, except Weiler, who, in a note delivered by O'Leeds, expressed his sympathy for the family, and told them to send for him if he could be of any service. He was not again summoned. Words can not describe the dismay of the new-comers when they learned the state of affairs. Nathaniel's jaws came together with a snap, and his face assumed a stern, terrible look. O'Leeds was kindly and soothingly sympathetic. And Germain — may the gods forbid that I should ever be called upon to chronicle another such expression on a human face. The cruel ferocity of his countenance, and the murderous gleam of his eyes, made him an object of terror to good Aunt Mehitable. Minerva was bewildered and stunned by the story of elopement, and when she had heard it all, buried her face in her handkerchief, and a sense of her loss fell upon her with

all its crushing weight; but in the depths of humility she found her Savior, and although her heart was breaking, Terp heard her softly say: "Thy will, oh Lord! not mine!"

What must be done must be done quickly, if the couple be apprehended before they reached the place where Satalia had said, "all pursuit would be useless" — so the chief of police decided. It was conceded by all that they were somewhere south of the Ohio river, and the cream of the police force and many private detectives were employed to look for a hidden trail.

O'Leeds went up the river, Germain went down the river, and Nathaniel went tearing around through the state of Kentucky with all the force of his vigorous nature. He was not at home bodily or spiritually, and damned and slammed things and people at a tremendous rate. The police and the private detectives left no stone unturned, apparently, and yet they were baffled on every hand, and no clew could be found. You see, they were all after a cab with two white horses attached. The search went on with undiminished vigor for more than a week. An old woman, in a small village many miles down the river, gave Germain a garter which she had picked up on the bank of the river, a dainty bit of feminine underwear, made of white satin and rubber. It was certainly Frossie's garter, for these words had been written upon it with indelible ink: "Frossie Graydon's garter, *Manus de tabula*." They were written thereon by Thalia, in a spirit of pleasantry, with a desire to tease her sister. Twenty miles up the river a small boy found a white kid shoe, which, upon examination, proved to be the property of the absent maiden. O'Leeds secured it. In the center of the state of Kentucky Nathaniel was given a pocket book which had belonged to his missing daughter. A man had found it at the side of a turnpike; it contained nothing but a scrap of paper upon which Aggie had entered a bill of particulars about some purchases made by the trio. The initials "F. G." were on the

book, and Nathaniel recognized it as one he had presented her. A detective found a lace collar in quite another portion of the state, which Minerva recognized as one she had fashioned with her own hands. Each article was regarded as a clue by the finder, but the detectives entertained a widely different view of the matter, and concluded that the garter, shoe, collar, and pocket book, had been strewn around promiscuously, for the purpose of misleading those who came in pursuit, and, furthermore, that the missing pair could not be found by giving these articles attention.

At the end of ten days the stricken family returned home. In two weeks they were informed by the chief of police that all further efforts to discover the whereabouts of the couple would prove unavailing; that all had been done that could be done, and he advised the family to discontinue the search. This man was acquainted with all phases of crime and iniquity, and did not always view things in the same light as people who were not familiar with, by daily experience, the awful turpitude of the human heart. He held what he claimed to be a logical view of the matter: "Elopements generally turn out all right in the end," said he to one of the force, and he could even then see, with his mind's eye, the girl and the man living in the sweets of an honorable married life; or, perhaps, she had fallen from a virtuous altitude to a life of shame. If the man was not rich, by and by poverty would pinch them, or he would abandon her, and where in this wide world could a poor, wayward, broken-hearted girl go except back to the loving arms and forgiving heart of mother? This was the chief's logic, given in the light of many years' experience. Germain brought the tidings from police headquarters, one evening when the family, together with O'Leeds and Weiler, were all assembled after tea in the parlor of the Graydon mansion. Nathaniel could endure it no longer; a reaction came upon his strong nature, and he sobbed like a child.

“My darling! My darling! Gone to a doom worse than death. Oh, to think I should be smitten by the hand of my God to the very earth, in these my old days. What have I done to be dealt with so harshly? I thought there was no man on earth so happy as myself among my daughters, and with my faithful wife. How could I know or dream that it would not always last? Earthly happiness depends upon the security and stability of our earthly treasures. If the thief comes by night and steals them away, in a single moment, the whole of life’s journey is rolled together as a scroll, for past joys are forgotten in present pain, and future good hides behind the shadows of present calamity.”

Minerva’s voice, in thrilling accents, answered: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

“Can you,” said Nathaniel, “still retain your faith in God, when your best earthly treasure has been thus rudely torn from your bosom? When your heart-strings have been so cruelly shaken by the hand of the spoiler?”

And the soft voice answered: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. The Lord is my refuge, and my strength, and my deliverer; a very present help in times of trouble.”

“But how can I endure life without her?”

Softer and sweeter than before: “‘My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest,’ saith the Lord thy God.”

“Dear mamma,” said Thalia, impulsively throwing her arms around Minerva, “how can we give her up? What will our lives be without her?”

“And, oh!” said Aggie, “I can not live — to live would be to suffer death daily —”

“Gone to a life of shame! gone to a life of dishonor! My Frossie — the light of home — the hope of my declining years. Oh, may the curse of almighty God fall upon the man who betrayed her, and took our sunshine and joy and light away. May he suffer the torments of the damned while

he lives, and sink into endless hell when he dies. May his right arm be palsied, his eyes lose their sight, and his tongue rot in his mouth; and may his soul die in his body, and live no more except in the flames of damnation!"

And the soft voice answered: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

"Dear friends," said O'Leeds, with a voice trembling with emotion and deep sympathy, "my heart aches for you in your great sorrow; I realize how desolate and dark home will be without her —"

And the low voice said, still quoting Scripture: "I am the light of the world; whosoever believeth on me shall not dwell in darkness."

"But, mamma," said weeping Aggie, "the hours will be so long, the days will be so dreary; our hearts will be so sad without her. Oh! what shall we do?"

And the mother's voice replied: "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Then silence fell upon them, broken only by sobs that could not be repressed. Presently the soft voice, trembling at first with anguish, began to say: "Dear Lord, who saved our souls and placed our feet upon the rock of ages where no perils can find us and no disasters make us afraid; sweet Christ, whose blood is the life of the world; whose love is the strength of nations; who was willing to endure the ills of earth life for the glory of the Father; who accepted shame and death for us; whose bosom is a refuge from all danger; what would we do, if, in our great distress, we could not find Thee? Where can we find peace and rest save in thee? We need Thee always, but we need Thee most when our burden is greater than we can bear. Our grief hides everything, except Thy dear face; in our deep humility we would kiss Thy feet; in our agony we would lean upon Thy breast, and find shelter within Thy strong arms, which are able to carry the sins of the world. We placed our treasures in the shadow of the

Rock, feeling that they would be safe in the keeping of the good Shepherd, but our brightest jewel has been taken; we placed ourselves in the shadow of the cross, trusting alone in Thy goodness and mercy, and, also, we can not understand why our trust should be so rudely shaken, and our faith so sorely tried. Help us in our weakness to find Thee aright. Let our faith be as the faith of the patriarch of Uz, and our love as strong as the love of Mary Magdalen; help us to kiss the rod and bless Thy holy name; help us to believe that it is for our good, and in Thine own good time all will be made right. Lead us and we can not go astray; guard our ways and no harm can reach us. We are as little children pleading with Thee for deliverance, knowing that Thou art ever near, yet failing to understand why our calamity should come upon us. 'Darkness is Thy secret place and a pavilion of dark water and thick clouds of the sky are around about Thee, but because Thou hast been my help, therefore, in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.' Oh, mysterious God, whose heights are unattainable; whose depths are illimitable, and whose boundlessness can not be explored, we are told to cast our burdens upon Thee and find sustaining grace. Somewhere out in the wide, wicked world our darling is this night; we can not go to her; we can not rescue her from the dangers to which she is exposed. There is none to help her but Thee. Thou art mighty to save, Thou art strong to deliver, and, if it be Thy gracious will, bring her back to us, to the home she has left so cheerless, to the hearts she has left so sad. Be a wall of fire about her to save and lead her through the mazes of sin unsullied to the arms of her Saviour. If it be Thy righteous will that she return to us covered with a mantle of shame and dishonor, oh, precious Saviour give us strength to bare it. Better death than shame, but if it be Thy will, lead us by Thy hand, and sustain us by Thy grace, and neither shame nor anything shall make our love cold. If she has sinned, forgive her; if she has been betrayed, be merciful

and tender and woo her again to the path of rectitude. Perhaps we loved her too much; perhaps, in our weakness, we made her an idol, and Thou didst trace upon the table of stone, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' Oh, forgive our sin; remember it no more against us. We are human, Thou art divine. We are finite, Thou art infinite. Lead us by thy counsel; teach us to live daily as if we recognized the great responsibility of living, and the certainty of change and death. Soothe our bruised and bleeding hearts, and forgive our sins for the dear Lord's sake."

And there was silence and sounds of weeping. Germain had not spoken. The hope of finding his lost love had buoyed him to the present time, but hope was now gone. He sat stoically, listening to the words of the weeping and broken-hearted parents and sisters, a picture of despair. There was a far away look in his eyes, and it is even doubtful whether he heard all that was said or not. His anguish was great, and his fierce temper beat in sullen fury until his muscles swelled out like whip cords. The freezing glitter of his eyes, the cruel expression of his mouth, and the manifest spirit of hatred and revenge that played upon his countenance, was a terrible sight to the gentle Minerva and her family. It was evident that the evil had triumphed over the good in his nature, and Terp shudderingly whispered to Mr. Weiler, "That somebody would probably get hurt." Weiler did not understand her, and not being on good terms, did not ask her to explain. Germain arose, and they never forgot the wild, insane expression of his countenance, and the terrible words he uttered:

"Talk of God and Christ at such a time as this! What have the dwellers of heaven to do with the plans of the devils in hell? I tell you we are victims of chance and circumstance. To-day we are strong in love and hope, to-morrow we are in a dark pit from whose labyrinthian maze we cannot escape. We boast of happiness, and feel strong in

earthly bliss, when ruin is only a day ahead of us. Hate is always on the trail of love. Shame follows virtue, and dishonor lies in wait for the pure in heart. Our lives are in the clutches of fate; our destinies are shaped by our surroundings—shaped for heaven if our environs be good, shaped for hell if they are evil. Our treasures are like the sands on the shore of the ocean, they slip into the cruel waves and we see them no more forever.”

And the soft voice said: “Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth; lay up your treasures in heaven, where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

“Fool that I was,” continued Germain, not heeding, and, perhaps not hearing, Minerva’s words; “not to dream of danger. Like a serpent he crossed my path; like a serpent he twined his slimy length around her affections; like a serpent he fastened his poisonous fangs on the one I love dearer than I love my own life; like a serpent he slinks away and leaves no trail; and like a serpent, by the eternal God above me, he shall die! I’ll follow him to the end of the world. He cannot escape me. I will dip my hands in blood for the honor of this household, and rid the world of his vile presence! I’ll kill him! I’ll stab him to death, and the dogs shall lick his blood from the ground! I have sworn it; if I fail to keep my oath, may my name be blotted from the memory of those I love, and may my soul sink to endless perdition. To-night I leave this place. Frossie shall return to you, and Paul Satalia shall die!”

Germain’s voice arose to a frenzied pitch as he uttered these words, and before any one was aware of his intentions, he rushed from the room, and they saw him no more for many weeks.

Terp was affected almost to tears by the expressions of grief around her, and when Germain was gone, said excitedly, “I wish I had pitched that miserable little spider, Satalia,

into the Ohio river. What a deal of trouble it would have saved."

Weiler, who had been striving, with indifferent success, to compose a few appropriate remarks, said: "Perhaps it will not turn out so badly after all. I have known cases of runaway matches that proved agreeable, afterwards, to all concerned. To endeavor to find them at this late date would be a useless expenditure of time and money. Interference now would be of no avail. The only really bad feature about it is that he was already a married man, as we have learned since their departure."

"Mr. Weiler," said Terp, wheeling in her chair and facing him, "will the price of hogs advance next winter, or will it be about the same as last winter?"

Weiler glared at her like an enraged bull.

CHAPTER X.

"ALAS! FOR THE RARITY OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY."

The two detectives retained by the Graydons to continue the search after the missing couple, "wasted their substance in riotous living," and had plenty of substance as long as they were retained. They did not think it worth their while to waste time in looking for what they could not find, and considered their whole duty the laborious act of drawing their pay. They were finally discharged, by advice of the chief of police, who was too honorable to allow any man to be fleeced by such rascally officials.

The following, clipped from the *County Clarion*, explains itself:

"It is our duty to mention a most deplorable society event, in which the family of our most esteemed fellow-citizen, Hon. Nathaniel Chadsworth Graydon, are directly concerned. The particulars of the

case are about as follows: The charming and accomplished Miss Euphrosyne Graydon has been the sole possessor of the affections of *two* well-known gentlemen of this community. Both loved the charming maiden — ‘two hearts beat as one,’ so to speak — and it seems that the fascinating damsel had the capacity for loving more than one gentleman at a time, for she engaged herself to one and eloped with the other. Mr. Rudolph Germain is the one whose affections she betrayed; Paul Satalia, the well-known music teacher, is the gentleman with whom she eloped. Miss Frossie visited the city of ——— on the third of July, ostensibly for the purpose of purchasing a wedding outfit for her approaching marriage with Germain; but, in fact, to grasp a favorable opportunity of eloping with Prof. Satalia. The opportunity arrived on the night of the fourth, during the well-remembered storm that passed over the city on that date. The couple adroitly managed to separate themselves from their friends on a plea of wishing to see the display of fireworks at the suspension bridge across the Ohio River. They were followed by Miss Terpsichore Graydon, the careful and prudent sister of the unfortunate girl, who watched their every movement while they were on the bridge. They conducted themselves in a most shocking manner, attracting the attention of many by their incessant billing and cooing. The intrepid Miss Terp was just behind them, on the main thoroughfare, but could not, on account of the pressure of the crowd, reach the deluded girl, nor prevent their escape. She heard them speak of their proposed flight, as if it had been premeditated and planned with the utmost coolness and precision. He told her that a cab and horses would be in waiting, on the Kentucky side, at the appointed time; that they would fly to a place where no one could find them; that after enjoying a short honeymoon, would commence a tour of the world, giving exhibitions of their wonderful musical abilities in large towns and cities; that they would live so happily together, seeing all the grand sights of the Old and New World, and have an abundance of money and an unlimited number of good friends among the great musicians. What must have been the feelings of that anxious, loving sister, who was compelled to listen to the schemes of the designing villain and the wayward girl, without being able even to make an effort to save her. While the terrible storm was raging they made their escape, remaining on the bridge until the great crowd had left, then passing rapidly to the Kentucky side, where a cab and two white horses awaited them; the elder sister, almost frenzied with grief, followed rapidly, screaming for help; but they were too quick for her, and, entering the

cab, were whirled quickly away in the driving rain. Miss Terpsichore, in a frantic endeavor to stop them in their flight, laid hands on the rear part of the vehicle, and was thrown violently forward, dragged quite a distance along the road, and left in an insensible condition. Much time elapsed, necessarily, before pursuit was made, and, up to the hour of going to press, all efforts to find a clew to the whereabouts of the runaways have proved unavailing. But little is known of Prof. Satalia prior to his residence in this place. During his stay among us his deportment was excellent and his character unimpeachable, his rare musical talents making him a most acceptable addition to our best social circles. Since his departure, we learn from Miss Terp Graydon, to whom we are indebted for the above facts, that he had a wife and three children at Nashville, Tennessee. In justice to the giddy Frossie, whose rash act has not only taken her from the pale of respectable society, but also made a once happy home desolate, we state that she was not aware of the existence of wife number one, the elder sister being the only one aware of the facts, and she obtained them accidentally, only a few days prior to the elopement. Not being aware of her sister's attachment, she did not divulge the matter until it was too late. The *Clarion* has made it a rule never to drag such matters before the public, but on account of the high standing of all persons concerned, we feel constrained to make a brief mention of this matter, believing that we voice the popular sentiment of our people in extending our heartfelt sympathy to the afflicted family."

Nathaniel Graydon read the above, and found quite a bit of relief for his troubled mind in punching the cranium of the vocabulous editor.

Naturally you will want to know what society said about the matter, and the quickest way to give you an insight to the feelings of this outraged community will be to cite you to the small talk of the Church Aid Society to which Frossie belonged. This society met once a month, the meetings being held on the last Tuesday night of each month. The Graydon girls were not present at the June meeting, but donated a sum of money to the society which caused them, and especially Frossie, to become a subject for discussion.

At the June meeting Sister Tyler said: "Frossie Graydon

is the sweetest and most generous girl in this community, always ready to lend a helping hand and saving all her pocket money for charitable purposes. I envy Minerva Graydon the possession of such a jewel. Paul Satalia deserves much credit for the rapid manner in which he has developed her rare musical talents, and as a community we are certainly very fortunate in securing the services of Prof. Satalia in such a small town. He is a perfect gentleman, and has qualities that would make him famous."

At the July meeting Sister Tyler said: "I was shocked to hear of the elopement of Frossie Graydon and Paul Satalia, but it was no more than I expected. Frossie is a girl I never particularly admired; she always had a bad look out of her eyes; and I always regarded Satalia as a loose character. He looks like the portrait of a sheep-thief I once noticed at the State fair."

At the June meeting Sister Jones said: "Paul Satalia is certainly a great musician, and has but one rival in these parts, and that one his pupil, Frossie Graydon. What would this community do without those Graydon girls? They lead in everything, and are so unassuming and lady-like in deportment. Frossie, especially, is the very essence of all that's good and charming."

At the July meeting Sister Jones said: "This elopement is the legitimate result of Frossie's immodest and unrestrained conduct at all times. The two were together most of the time, and what better could you expect. She flirted with every young man in town, and my eyes! how deceitful she was. What excellent taste she displayed in eloping with that vicious little specimen of tarantula, who only had brains enough to play on a squeaky fiddle and elude his creditors. Germain is to be congratulated upon his escape from a life of misery with that little pie-faced coquette."

At the June meeting Sister Smith said: "The Graydon girls are spiritually-minded, and the best hearted girls I ever

knew. All last winter Frossie waited on old Widow Scroggins, who was so extremely poor and sick, all the time. Every morning I could see her pass my house, on the road to the widow's, with a basket of provisions, and a great many times Thalia and Aggie were with her; and when the poor old woman died, do you remember what beautiful tributes of flowers they placed upon her casket? Frossie is a second Florence Nightingale, and as forgetful of self as Lucille. I never knew a girl so fascinatingly beautiful who was so thoroughly and completely devoted to the welfare of others; generally such girls are vain and selfish. I do not understand how she can be good and at the same time handsome. Rudolph Germain has indeed found the pearl of great price."

At the July meeting Sister Smith said: "I always told Mr. Smith that Frossie Graydon was deceitful and would come to some bad end. There was always about her an air of insincerity and affectation which I do not admire. She was always making an outward show of being charitable, but she could not have been so at heart. One day last winter she passed my house with a large basket which she said contained a roast chicken and some dainties for Widow Scroggins, whom she said was very ill, but I investigated the matter and found that she had told me a flat falsehood. I kept my own counsel, but looked all over the Scroggins premises and alleys, a few days later, and *there was not a chicken bone to be found* anywhere around there. What could I think but that the girl had told me a falsehood? Chickens, even roasted chickens, have bones, and the bones are always visible around the place where the fowl is dissected. I went to the dwelling of Sister Scroggins one day to find out from her own lips the proof of the girl's deceit, but Frossie was there, and, probably having discovered that her duplicity was about to be exposed, had brought a large basket of delicacies on that occasion, and the widow being too sick to talk, I said nothing. I think Germain has escaped a horrible fate; what could that

dear, good, proud-hearted man do with such a selfish, deceitful, hypocritical vixen as Frossie Graydon?"

At the June meeting Elder Robbins said: "Speaking of the Graydons, reminds me of a circumstance that came under my own observation. This spring while I was giving my series of discourses on 'The Exceeding Sinfulness of Sin,' I noticed, every evening during the sermons and the revival that followed, that old Ephraim Grubbs was present enjoying his religious privileges with his old time enthusiasm. Grubbs had not been able to leave his home at any time for a year prior to that time, for, you know, he is badly crippled and otherwise terribly afflicted. My curiosity was aroused. I asked him one evening how he managed to attend church so regularly. 'Lord bless you, Brother Robbins,' said he, 'it's the doin's of them Graydon girls; they fetch me to meetin' every night in a buggy, may the Lord bless 'em, specially Miss Frossie.' And the old man enjoyed himself in his usual fervent and devout way during the meeting. Had it not been for the Graydon girls, of course it would have been impossible for him to have been there a single time. Prof. Satalia told me recently that Frossie was the most accomplished pianist he ever knew, and you know the professor is a man of excellent taste and good judgment. When such men as he speak well of any one, you may be sure they have genius."

At the July meeting Brother Robbins said: "Notwithstanding the downfall of Frossie Graydon, I think the sisters, Thalia and Aggie, worthy of recognition. You know, the family contribute largely to the support of the church, and, doubtless, they all have a predisposition to go astray. I have noticed that it runs in families, and this family, probably, needs the protection of church influences. Frossie was the wildest of the three. She used to bring old Eph. Grubbs to church for the purpose of teasing the young gentlemen who wished to accompany her, or to share her company at home. Such conduct reveals a character that is unworthy of imita-

tion, and shows that her heart is really bad. As for Satalia, he never held an exalted place in my estimation. I am a reader of character, and can not be imposed upon. The first time I met him I said to my wife, 'There's a colossal rogue.' He wanted to give my daughter instructions in music, but I would not allow her to associate with a man upon whose countenance was stamped the word 'villain' so unmistakably. He could n't teach anything except the rudiments of music anyway, and played most of his pieces by ear. His praise of Frossie Graydon was, of course, a bait to catch patronage. She had learned to play a number of pieces of easy music passably well, and because she was handsome, some people thought she had great musical talent. I often wondered how they got the idea, but did not care to injure her by saying so."

At the June meeting Sister Aurelia Swinton, a girl of about Frossie's age, said: "Frossie Graydon told me to tell you she was sorry that she could n't attend our meeting to-night, and sent a contribution of ten dollars and a lot of flowers to be sold in bouquets to the highest bidders. The girls are unavoidably absent for the first time. They are the very life of all our gatherings, and I do wish they would all get married and give us a chance at the men. Frossie is the handsomest girl in the world, and just as good as she is pretty. Oh, if I could only look out of my eyes as she does I could make the boys gobble, at forty rods; and such hair, just as soft as satin, and it falls away down her back just like it does in a clinging to the cross chromo!"

At the July meeting, Miss Aurelia Swinton said: "Ma says it's just a warning from Providence, this elopement is, and that Frossie Graydon is a living example of social depravity. She was n't very pretty, anyway; her hair was too bunchy and hung down like a horse's tail, and she used 'Ocean Cream' to improve her complexion. I never could endure her, always flirting and simpering around the young

men, claiming their attention, when they were tired of her and wanted to pay tribute to other girls. The brazen thing, to pose continually as a model of virtue and propriety, and then whisk off with that limber-shanked Italian, when she was already engaged to such a noble-hearted fellow as Rudolph Germain."

Sister Stebbins, in June: "I endorse every good thing you say about Frossie Graydon. She is an angel, all but the wings; and as gentle and unassuming as a child. It must be a source of great comfort to Minerva Graydon to think that her own sweet Christian character has been so indelibly imprinted upon her children."

Sister Stebbins, in July: "It is truly shocking that Minerva Graydon could not manage to drill enough gospel truth into Frossie to cause her to act differently; where there is such a pious atmosphere at all times, one would think that those brought in contact with it would get religion by absorption. One can't tell who is a hypocrite and who is not a hypocrite, nowadays. And just to think that that vile creature was allowed to give Frossie music lessons, month in and month out, and no one to watch them. They must have been awful wicked all the time."

Sister Ruggles, in June: "It is my good fortune to be quite intimate with the Graydons, my husband being a third cousin to Mr. Graydon's first wife. I must say that I do not know of a family anywhere who are so completely fettered to each other. I tell you, it makes me feel that the good that came out of Nazareth is bound to fill the world with the Spirit of God, when I see filial love and sisterly affection so clearly defined."

Sister Ruggles, in July: "Yes, it's just as you say, the whole affair looks dark. I told Mr. Ruggles several months ago that Minerva Graydon had better watch Frossie, for she was always inclined to be rapid, and the girls are all allowed to mingle promiscuously with the opposite sex; it's a wonder

all of them have not eloped. I tell you most any girl will elope if she gets the matrimonial bee in her bonnet. If Thalia doesn't marry that odious O'Leeds pretty soon, *she* will be running away with some strolling musician with a monkey and a hand-organ. The entire Graydon family are deceitful and hypocritical; but, of course, I would n't like to say so."

Sister Ipsillion Helstedtler, in a brief wrangle with the English language, in June, said: "Vrossie Grayton vas a goot gairl."

Sister Ipsillion, in July: "Yah, do n't I tole you some-dings apout dat gal? petter sday at home mit her fadder."

Deacon Strawbridge, in June: "Frossie Graydon is an exemplary character."

Deacon Strawbridge, in July: "Frossie Graydon's downfall is the legitimate result of loose habits."

Thus, you see, Frossie had lost caste in social circles. When one is up the world is blind to one's faults; when one is down the world is blind to one's virtues. A man's character is often assassinated in the house of his friends, and no wall that one builds around himself is so unstable and so easily destroyed as the wall of friendship. Only a very few will stand by you in adversity. It is not the people who do the largest amount of evil in this world who are punished by the immutable decrees of society. It's the ones who fail to hide their transgressions who suffer most. Great villains are usually great diplomats. Society has not learned the art of shearing black sheep. Those who have not the ability to hide their sins are branded with shame, and the shrewd one may "smile and smile and be a villain still." The sins of the old ewe may be as scarlet, and she may be the heronie of a hundred suppressed scandals, and still society yields to her wanton embrace. It's the lamb who, in a moment of ecstasy, yields to the tempter and reveals her sin to the world, who receives bitter condemnation from that leprous virgin, good

society. Your capacity for being wicked depends largely upon your ability to conceal the truth and the flexibility of your conscience. No man can do evil and be happy, unless he can adapt his mind and heart to his deeds and misdeeds. Persons who are concerned about such things as a clean heart and a clear conscience do not, and could not, successfully play the role of villain in this drama of life. There are persons whose moral natures are beyond the microscopic vision of the pure in heart, yet, who are able to conceal their iniquities. Society is only interested in the surface indications of a man's character; his sins may be dimly visible beneath the surface, but the hilarious old virgin does not see them. Neither does she dig for diamonds, for society has but one sense, the sense of sight. It magnifies everything that comes to the surface, and is willing that the evil should appear on the surface, but if it does not, the celestial hag is satisfied. Society should be a most rigid disciplinarian to lead men to the higher walks of life, but it is not. It preaches what it does not practice, and many times protects itself at the expense of injured innocence.

Thalia and Aggie could not resume their former way of living. Everything was changed; in a twinkling the blossoms of their existence had been laid in the dust. Their sorrow was so great that there was not room for anything else. As the days dragged wearily by their grief did not abate, but seemed to deepen. Aggie wept over a kid shoe and lace collar almost constantly, and Thalia carried a satin garter in her bosom. They were inconsolable, and Nathaniel feared lest the strain on their mental faculties should prove too great, or kill them outright. But grief never kills, and seldom furnishes a subject for the insane asylum. The future seemed to them a hopeless and black expanse, that shaped itself in darkness, and was like a barren pathway that leads through an unfamiliar country, wherein who travels is exposed to constant danger, and where the growl of wild beasts and

the hiss of reptiles strike dismay to the souls of the timid. Frossie seemed with them yet—who have lost their best friends will understand. Her presence seemed to be just beside them, walking with them everywhere, and yet they could not touch her. She was absent, yet present. To understand that she was gone, probably forever, or if to return, to return in shame, was something they could not realize. The long hours, the long days, the weeks, months, and years without Frossie—how could they endure it? God help us all when our dark days come and our calamity is upon us! We can find no peace then, save from the dim presence whom men call God.

Minerva alone stood erect, striving to soothe her distracted husband and children. Her face was like a warm sun shining through the clouds, scattering life and strength and light all around. “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings.” She went from one to another of her loved ones, beseeching them to “lay their burdens upon the Lord, that He would never leave them desolate nor forsake them.” She suffered intense pain as her white, patient face plainly indicated, but no word of complaint ever escaped her. She had been a faithful Christian during her life, serving her Christ in all things, and with Polycarp, in the hour of misfortune, could say: “He has never done me the least wrong, how then can I blaspheme my King and my Redeemer?” Complaint from her would have been blasphemy to her mind, and so she suffered, and her face became whiter and whiter, and her very soul writhed in agony. Nathaniel, after his grief had somewhat subsided, began to overhaul his memory for a precedent for Frossie’s case. Finally the “Book of the House of Graydon” was examined in search of the desired information; for Nathaniel’s hobby of “like producing like” and “history repeating itself,” left no room for doubt in his mind, that somewhere among the branches and twigs of the family tree he would find a story of elopement. He found

the coveted precedent away back in an Oriental tradition, handed down by his posterity when a branch of his family were of nomadic disposition. It was as follows:

“Miriam, daughter of Sheik Abdallah, was born in the year —, B. C. As a woman she was tall, beautiful and voluptuous, with large gazelle-like eyes that charmed all who beheld her. Hassen Ben Kahled, a young man of fortune and esteem among his people, loved Miriam against the will of Abdallah, who considered the fair Bedouin girl a gift from Allah, not to be given away to ordinary mortals. Hassen did not despair, but watched the well where the damsels of the tribe came for water and there met the lovely Miriam. He told her of his love and wooed her from the arms of her father. She consented to leave and fly over the desert with him to a place of security. One night, at the hour of midnight, Hassen’s nejidde steed stood before Abdallah’s tent, and Hassen cried out like a whip-poor-will three times; Miriam came from the tent with her wardrobe in one hand and all was well. Upon the back of the fleet-footed steed they sped away across the yellow sands. Abdallah pursued but they escaped him, with many a cry of defiance. In after years Abdallah was reconciled by the advent of a young Arab in the family of Hassen Ben Kahled.”

Nathaniel read this with great interest, and leaned his head back wearily in his chair. By and by he dreamed he saw Satalia and Frossie on the back of a coal-black charger, clambering at a terrific gait among the crags of Tennessee.

And the detectives had been following a cab and two white horses.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WASP AND THE DAGGER.

Charleston, South Carolina, is, was, and will be a great city, notwithstanding civil war, earthquakes, and other disadvantages. She was the mother of secession, and the instigator of a dark and bloody rebellion. It was there that Major Anderson, with a handful of sturdy patriots in Fort Sumpter,

defied the powers of the great commonwealth of South Carolina, and gallantly endeavored to keep afloat the flag that has never been lowered by any nation upon earth. It was in Fort Sumpter that the first heroes of the rebellion developed. When the gunners rolled their powder into the sea, wrapped themselves in wet garments, and covered their faces, in order to endure the suffocating heat and smoke from the burning barracks, and Lieutenant Hall grasped the broken flag staff, walked up into the embrace of death, where shot and shell were flying fast, and planted the old flag on the parapet of the Fort, where it waved until the supplies of Sumpter were exhausted, and surrender enforced. It was there, on that 7th of April afterwards that a fleet of nine terrible ironclads endeavored to annihilate Sumpter, and were targets for thirty-five thousand pounds of metal, thrown from rebel guns, which did no harm whatever to the great iron-covered sea turtles. It was here, on the 21st of August, 1863, a siege and bombardment of the city was commenced by the battery "Swamp Angel." In fourteen months many of the best business houses, churches, hotels, stores, principal public buildings, and palatial residences were destroyed, and the lower portion of the city almost blotted out by shells hurled by Yankee gunners. It was here that the defeated and desperate rebels endeavored to injure the Union case by burning and destroying their own property, leaving the city in ruins, but the devastation of war was in the fulfillment of the "hand-writing on the wall," which appeared against that fair city when she raised her red flag of treason, with its palmetto tree and lone star, in defiance of the properly constituted authorities. The rebellion was a national duel in which the challenging parties were badly worsted. The South recklessly demanded mortal combat with the North, and the challenge was accepted in a way that was, to say the least, enthusiastically vigorous. What the South should have found in her prosperous days, she raked from the ashes of her ruined

cities, viz: wisdom and unselfish patriotism. It was impossible for her people to learn the A, B, C's of human liberty until slavery had been abolished. Southern soil was enriched by the blood and bones of heroes, but it required a baptism of blood to perpetuate the Union. The people of the South labored under the delusion that the entire nation was south of the Ohio River, and it was absolutely necessary that the people who own the best part of the government should cross over and riddle their pet hobbies with psalm-singing bullets. The combat was terrible, and the results disastrous, for when a divided country wheels into line, and great armies face each other with loaded guns in their hands and blood in their eyes, something disagreeable is sure to happen. Something unpleasant did happen, and the South kissed the hem of her Saviour's garment. I do not desire to say anything in this about her splendid climate, soft Italian skies, of the magnificent forests of pine; of its moss-covered groves; its towering oaks; its lovely jassamines, under whose "bright leaves and golden bells" the chivalric laddie woos the night-eyed lassie, according to precedent; nor of the superb magnolias; nor the opaline grandeur of the face of nature, for my mission in this chapter is of graver importance, and I shall make no endeavor to mislead you by a confusion of introductory sentences.

In this chapter you will lose sight of Southern opulence and beauty, and gaze upon the detail of a most deplorable tragedy which I am called upon to relate. In doing so I ask your pardon. I have evolved many plans whereby I might, consistently, leave out the terrible things herein contained, but none of them are satisfactory; I am compelled to recite them in order that you may read the balance of the book understandingly. So averse am I to a recital of horrible things that I have several times laid aside my pen with a half-formed resolution to abandon the story altogether rather than relate the disagreeable facts of this chapter, but my path of

duty is plain. I cannot entertain you unless I give you the *whole* story, but in doing so I shall spare your feelings as much as possible, trusting that you will not read this to your children without requiring them to listen to the complete story. I never could see a good reason why our daily newspapers should publish the sickening details of every crime and scour the country more closely for the bad deeds than for the good deeds of the people. If public taste is vitiated and demands a full knowledge of every crime and the unlimited exposure of vice, even that would not justify a supply for the demand. If society should demand obscene books and pictures, would it not be your duty as a good citizen to do all in your power to prohibit the supply? Has any one a right to feed a depraved appetite or passion? Is it right to pour whisky down the throat of an inebriate simply because he wants it? Is it right for a man to open a billiard saloon or a gambling den and induce young men to waste their time and money, simply because young men desire to waste their time and money? Is it right for men to lead trusting and willing damsels to a life of shame, simply because they are not strong to resist temptation? I say no, to all such queries, and I further say that it is the duty of authors and journalists to hide sin and iniquity, not from the law, but from public gaze. Therefore, for the sake of society, I shall in this chapter reveal nothing but the hard outlines of some things which might be elaborated until several chapters were required to hold it all, and although your nervous system may be somewhat disturbed, yet you will in the end forgive me and agree that I am justified in giving you the facts just as they occurred.

Night Policeman Thomas Jethro, Esq., was pacing his beat on Bay street, on the night of —, in his usual slow and deliberate way, little dreaming of the terrible event so near at hand. He was a tall, stout-looking gentleman, on a small salary, and attended to and discharged his duties as well as he could for the money. The reader who visited

Charleston, before the war, will remember how beautiful and costly were some of the buildings on Bay street. Yonder was the *Courier* office. Near it the Union Bank, Farmers' and Exchange Bank, and the Charleston Bank, all finished and furnished with Oriental magnificence. These buildings were mutilated by the terrible "Swamp Angel," and the latter-day Belshazzars, who failed to read the handwriting on the wall, were taught a lesson of deep humility.

The moon was shining brightly, the hour was late, and the street lamps were in full bloom. Jethro's big ears hear footsteps coming; he looks; it is a woman away down the street; the woman passes him, and is immediately followed by a wild-eyed individual, who brushes past him quickly, and seems to be pursued by another man — a tall, athletic young fellow. Jethro notices them as they pass, but forgets them, almost immediately, as his salary does not justify him in keeping wide awake at such a late hour. Presently, there is a wild scream. Jethro awakes with a start, hastens back, and finds the little wasp-like fellow in the clutches of the athletic young man. The stout-looking gentleman has his left arm around the body of the little man, and in his right hand is a Moorish dagger covered with blood. Jethro hears these words, from the man who holds the dirk: "Die, dog, and sink to hell!" The woman had disappeared, and Jethro remembered her no more — how could he afford to on such a salary? He placed the young man under arrest, and the dead man was laid upon the sidewalk until assistance could arrive. The man in custody submitted quietly, and merely said that he did not kill the man. The evidence was against him, however, and he was locked up for safe keeping. The incarcerated man was Rudolph Germain; the dead man Paul Satalia. Had Germain hunted the object of his wrath down to the bitter end? It looked very much as if he had done so. On the preliminary examination it was drawn from him, that Satalia had stolen his promised bride; that he had started

in pursuit with motives of revenge; that he had followed the object of his wrath for weeks with these evil motives; that he had had murder in his heart, but had changed his mind, and had concluded to send the deceased to the penitentiary instead of the other place. He further claimed that he had met Satalia on the streets of Charleston by accident; that Satalia did not recognize him, and he followed him for the purpose of securing him, and demanding information about his lady love; that just as they were under the gas-light, Satalia made a movement as if opening the front of his coat, and immediately plunged the dagger into his own body. He (Germain) sprang forward, but was too late to prevent the deed; the man was dying, and had drawn the dagger away, and, as he felt that some one was near, had placed it mechanically in his (Germain's) hand, where it was when Jethro came upon the scene. A woman was there, just at the time, who said something in Irish, and disappeared. Germain contended that it was a plain case of suicide, and asked to be released, but no one believed his story, and he was taken back to prison to await final trial and judgment. In jail for murder! Oh! Rudolph Germain, how differently the future shapes itself, when we are victims of our own unholy passions and cannot follow our better selves through the winding ways of virtue. Is it not always best to allow our footsteps to be guided by reason, never resorting to wicked and desperate measures to accomplish the end for which we seek?

The Graydons were informed, in due time, of Germain's misfortunes. Aggie went to him; Thalia went to him; Terp went to him; Nathaniel went to him; Minerva prayed for him in his lonely cell; O'Leeds went to him, and even Weiler wrote a note of condolence, which ended by saying, he hoped there were no foundations for the charges against him. I am sorry to say that Germain's friends, one and all, thought him guilty, as charged, save one, and that one was Terpsichore. The Graydons were sorely distressed on account of

this added misfortune ; but I know the reader will not care to peer into nor behind the screen of their agony at this time. You see they firmly believed they had suffered all that nature could endure, but this new sorrow was added, and they did not die. I think there are many degrees of sorrow and pain, and one never knows when he has received the last feather's weight. When a man has the rheumatism, he imagines he suffers all the pangs of the damned ; by and by he gets the gout and wonders why he thought rheumatism painful. A woman has the toothache, and thinks her pain almost greater than she can bear ; by and by she gets a terrific neuralgia, and wonders why she thought toothache so terrible.

Now, the loss of Frossie was a terrible thing to contemplate, but to think that the generous but rashly impulsive young man who was her affianced husband, should stain his hands in human blood for her sake, added fresh fuel to their burning grief. I can not tell you what they said about it ; you are at liberty to make them say anything you please ; I can not dwell upon that point. I know that there were many tears from the girls ; a great many prayers and Bible quotations from Minerva ; a great many resolutions to stand by Germain to the last, by the gentlemen. Terp alone was calm and dry. The fool seamstress, about that time, wore a crape veil, having been deserted by the bunion doctor, and her fondest hopes withered and crumbled to dust ; it was never definitely known whether the veil was an emblem of mourning for Frossie, or the chiropodist, or for Germain. Aunt Mehitable was sorely tried by the grief of her friends and her own sorrow, and when Germain's misfortune came to her ears she placed her entire fortune at his disposal, if he should need it, to procure the best legal advice.

Able counsel was procured, and Germain was arraigned in court, early in September, to answer to a charge of murder. The trial was quite brief, considering the gravity of the case. The evidence against Germain was clear and strong, although

it was of a circumstantial character. Minerva gave, at length, the dreadful and threatening language used by Germain on the evening of his departure in search of the betrayer; the attorney prosecuting the case insisted upon her giving his exact words, and, much against her will, she repeated them as she remembered them, but she almost broke down as she repeated his horrible words, "I'll kill him! I'll stab him, and the dogs shall lick his blood from the ground!" She retired from the witness stand weak and sick at heart. Nathaniel, Aggie, Thalia, and O'Leeds, corroborated Minerva's story, although they thought they were sealing the doom of their friend. Terp testified that she had, on two occasions, heard Germain swear to take Satalia's life, and she had, also, heard Satalia solemnly swear to commit suicide if he failed to secure Frossie's love; but the prosecutor managed to tangle her testimony by getting her to tell a great many obvious falsehoods, which, though not within themselves harmful to anyone, answered the purpose of lessening the weight of her evidence.

The able attorney employed by the defense offered, in private consultation, to prove an alibi, or to spirit all the witnesses away, or to prove that Germain was crazy, but that gentleman declined with great emphasis. The policeman, Jethro, testified that he had found the defendant, at the time of the murder, with one arm around the deceased, and holding in his right hand a bloody dagger, which he identified as the one before him. Defendant was evidently very much excited at the time, and was heard to say, savagely, to the dying man: "Die, dog, and sink to hell!" He further said, on cross-examination, that an unknown woman was there for a moment, but had disappeared, and that efforts had been made to find this woman, but no clew to her whereabouts could be discovered.

Two things were argued in the case in favor of Germain: one was Terp's statement that she had heard Satalia swear to commit suicide, and the other evidence was that deceased had

no shirt on at the time of his death. Small things within themselves, but they assumed terrific proportions in a case where they were wholly relied upon to save a man's neck, against a chain of strong circumstantial evidence. Dickens' Buzfuz arguments faded into nothingness before these eminent legal lights, and the "chops, tomato sauce, and warming pan" of the Buzfuz case were but meagerly mentioned in comparison to this missing nether garment. But their eloquence was of no avail, for the opposing counsel proved clearly that a man without a shirt on his back was not necessarily a suicide, and cited cases where many of South Carolina's prominent statesmen and public men had died natural deaths without ever having worn a shirt.

The end of it was that Germain was convicted of murder in the first degree. But no sooner had the verdict been announced than something happened in the court room. It was this: "Divil take yez!" came in Hibernian accents from near the doorway, where Bridget Maloney was struggling with a bailiff who was endeavoring to bring her into court. "Howly Moses, did yez iver say sich a dirty blackguard a draggin' av a pore widdy woman into coort wid tin little wans to kape and niver an idle minute to spare, at all, at all? How could oi hilp sayin the spalpane stick hisself wid a chase knife?"

Bridget Maloney stood before Judge Mably, trembling like an aspen; by coaxing and threatening, her story was at length obtained.

On the night of the tragedy she was out late, and as she was passing down Bay street saw Satalia distinctly, under the full blaze of a gas jet, pull a dagger from his pocket and plunge it into his own breast. She saw Germain catch him in his arm as he was falling to the pavement; saw Satalia force the bloody dagger into Germain's right hand; was only three feet away at the time, and could not be mistaken about it. She then fled, and being afraid that she might in some way be-

come implicated in the matter, kept silent. Her opinions of the law and the attorneys were not complimentary, and she had a morbid fear that she would some day, in some way, be taken rudely from her "darlints." Being an honest woman, well known to the Court, her evidence had great weight.

CHAPTER XII.

A REVELATION.

Bridget Maloney had scarcely finished her story when another woman appeared on the scene. It was Satalia's landlady, who had found a letter that very morning written by Satalia immediately before he committed his rash act. It had been placed upon his bureau and had fallen behind it, where it had remained unnoticed until that morning. The letter was addressed, "To the public," on the envelope. It seemed more of an essay than a letter, and read as follows :

"I have neither friends nor money, nor good health, nor sound mental faculties, nor a desire longer to continue a struggle against odds which were always against me. Therefore, it is time to go ; time to leave a world where every man's hand is against me, because I am not built on the right plan. There is no pleasure in living when one has played his part and must, from necessity, leave the stage of action. I must die now, or die by inches ; my life has been a most miserable failure. It is true that I have attained a degree of fame among musicians ; but what is fame ? What does it do for its possessor but make him miserable and discontented ? Earthly happiness is found in the gratification of animal passions. Men of fine fiber can not prostrate themselves to schemes of debauchery without a sense of degradation and shame. The happy and contented man is usually a gross sensualist, living on a level with the

brute creation, and only a little ways beyond the pale of barbarism. The dying embers of my life will no longer light my way nor guide my footsteps. The darkness of death is not so dense and cheerless as the darkness of life. The future of eternity is not so foreboding and dreary as the future of time. Death is at least surcease from sorrow, and the silence and sleep which knows not waking, is better than the terrors of life. The grave is a place of refuge, when the perils of life overtake us and crush us to the earth. Life is a numbing pain, made up of *moments* of gladness and *years* of agony. Death is the surest antidote of misery. I embrace it as eagerly as a weary man embraces sleep. There is no hell as bitter and burning as the hell of a troubled conscience; no flames so cruel as the flames of remorse. For years my soul has been, like a thief in the night, prowling around after the substance of other men's hearts and lives, never daring to put on my true colors and appear to the world, black and stained with crime, as I have always been. My crimes have been against society, and have been such as libertines usually commit. My mother died with cholera at New Orleans; my father was killed by a steamboat boiler explosion, and I was left an orphan early in life. My parents were quite respectable, and I think I would have been a different man had my environments and early education been different. I was placed in the care of a French woman, who was a painted butterfly with gilt wings or something equally heartless and careless. She had money, therefore I had money, and plenty of it. She held tenaciously to the loose ideas of her nation, in regard to virtue and female purity. The harlot crowned by Louis Napoleon to rule France, has held imperial sway in French society to this day. She was my foster mother's sovereign, and right royally did she pay tribute to the scarlet queen. Her immoral practices were open to me, and I learned, as I grew older, to adopt her theories of social enjoyment. She had money and an abundance of social charms,

which, of course, screened her defects of character, and society asked no questions. By and by she lost her money and health, and I became a wandering minstrel on the streets of New Orleans, playing my violin or guitar to any one who would listen or give me a penny. My associations were necessarily of the worst character, or if not the worst, at least low down and vicious.

“After a while the French woman died, and I was forced on the world, alone and friendless, with nothing save my violin and guitar. I found employment in the orchestra at a concert garden, on a small salary. My musical attainments were very fine, and I was competent to teach music of the most difficult nature, on almost any instrument in common use. I suppose my income would have been sufficient to keep me in good style, but the trouble came in feminine apparel. I became devotedly attached to a beautiful actress, and we were married. I soon found that the lovely siren who sang such entrancing songs from her ‘bed of scarlet roses,’ had lured me to ruin, for underneath her lovely garments were claws which she used with energy and accuracy. We lived unhappily together for many years, during which three children were born. My wife could not endure music, and cared for nothing save ballet dancing. Night after night I sat in the orchestra and saw her appearing before a drunken crowd with little or no clothing, except a pair of silk tights. Flesh and blood could not endure it, and I became intensely jealous. We quarreled continually. One night I went behind the scenes and found my wife in the arms of another man, a man whom I hated; without a moment’s thought I struck him a terrific blow on the temple with my violin. I fled, and have never seen my family since that fatal night. The man did not die from the effects of the blow upon his temple, but for many months it was thought his reason was impaired. My wife afterwards became disqualified for the duties of her profession, and was obliged to engage in the hardest kind of

manual labor to keep herself and the children, and for a year she sent money to me through the mail, for I was for a long time not able to find employment. She desired me to return, but I would not. I suppose I should have supported them, for I loved my children dearly; but when loved ones are absent duty is sometimes hard to perform. I have no feelings of love or respect for my wife, and care not how much she has suffered, knowing that she merits it all. If she wants my body she can have it. She lives at No. —, — street, Nashville, Tennessee, where a telegram would reach her.

“Since I deserted my family I have traveled from place to place, teaching music, and always being admitted to the best circles of society — except during the first year after leaving my family — and sustaining the reputation of a gentleman of leisure among my pupils and friends. Among my students were many highly accomplished young ladies, and of these some became infatuated with me, and I accomplished their ruin in the most heartless way. I was driven from one place to another, when an exposure would be made, and my life would be in danger, but I cared for nothing save personal safety. Oh, mothers, with beautiful daughters, why are you so careless in your guardianship, and why are you so willing that they shall be exposed to the influences of well-dressed knaves? Beware of strangers who are able to fascinate your daughters, and give you no proof of excellent character! My last place of permanent residence was in the town of L—— in the state of ——, where I had a very large number of intelligent pupils. Among others were the daughters of Nathaniel Graydon, Esq. Of these, Miss Euphrosyne, or Frossie, as she was called, was my favorite. She was transcendently beautiful, the most lovely and accomplished young lady I ever met. I tried my blandishments upon her, but the merry, light-hearted young girl was not susceptible to flattery, and was too honorable to swerve from the path of her duty. She was engaged to one Germain, who hated me, and of whom I

stood in constant fear. I do not doubt that I succeeded in gaining the young lady's esteem and respect, for she was passionately fond of music, and we were together frequently. Never for a moment did she love me. My regard for her grew upon me day by day, and finally I loved her as madly as the sweet poet that came out upon the hills above the banks of the Doon loved his 'Highland Mary.' It seemed to me that I could not live without her, and every day she became nearer and dearer to me. I could not conceal my love, and told her about it. She was kindly sympathetic, but told me plainly and firmly that I must think no more of her; that she did not and could not return my love. My engagement with the Graydons ended, and I was not to come any more as instructor, but was to be received cordially as a friend of the family. I think Frossie thought it was not exactly right to receive any attention from me after I had declared my love for her, and she kept aloof as much as possible during the short interval I remained in the place.

"I met the Graydon girls in the city of — in July, where they were purchasing wedding outfits for their approaching marriage. On that occasion I resolved to make a last effort to gain her affections, and to woo her from her promised husband. Opportunity came on the evening of the Fourth, as Frossie and myself stood on the suspension bridge, across the Ohio River, witnessing a magnificent Fourth of July display of fire-works. The crowd was immense, almost crushing. Under pretense of supporting her, I succeeded in placing my right arm around her waist, not, however, without protest from her. I spoke to her of love, and plead with her in the tenderest language I could command, but she did not answer me. I urged her to flee with me, but she was silent. I lost sight of everything and everybody in my efforts to bring her love to me, and away from her intended husband. I thought my words had produced the desired effect, but was mistaken, and after long and earnest pleading, I was doomed to disap-

pointment. A storm suddenly came upon us, and the bridge was cleared immediately. She darted away from me quite angrily, and, being dazed by the awfulness of the storm, ran in an opposite direction from which she intended to go. I followed rapidly and caught her by the arm, and we did not stop until on the Kentucky shore. In a brief lull of the storm, as I was struggling with her, she said with terrible emphasis: 'Paul Satalia, I hate you! How dare you take advantage of the absence of my friends in this way? All my feelings of respect for you are changed to hatred. I loathe you! coward and villain!'

"Then the slumbering demon within me gained control, and I resolved to have her by foul means. By the use of soft words I succeeded in persuading her to go with me to the house of a friend until the storm should abate; I told her this house was a hotel, and so it was, but not in the true sense of the term. She went with me down a deserted street along the river side, and I told her I was acquainted with the man who kept the hotel, and as soon as the storm abated would take her back to the city. I intended in that place to accomplish her ruin. No sooner was she inside the building, however, than she was seized with a premonition of evil, and before any one could prevent, she rushed out into the storm, determined to seek assistance. I followed immediately and soon overtook her. Then, oh! ye gods! how can I tell it? We were in bad quarters, infested by wharf rats and river men of the worst character. This street was never used, especially after nightfall, by the better class of people, owing to its proximity to the river and its evil reputation. I found on the street, which had been deserted before, a number of drunken men who were quarreling, just a little way from us; a pistol was fired and a ball struck Frossie in the head; she was struggling to escape from my grasp at the time, and we were under the blaze of a feeble gas jet. With a piteous moan she sank to the ground and died almost instantly. Im-

mediately I was struck on the head with some hard substance, and fell insensible. I have no means of knowing how long I remained unconscious, but when I recovered sufficiently to stand, I found that the body of the girl had been taken away, and that I had been robbed. The street was deserted, and it was still raining; notwithstanding this, I trailed the villains to the shore of the Ohio by the blood that flowed from the fatal wound. I returned immediately to the house of my friend. It was a miserable den, which had been, for years past, a resort for criminals. Many dark deeds had been committed there, but for some reason the proprietor had escaped suspicion. This was the place into which I had lured the glorious girl, and from which she went to her doom. Pen can not describe my feelings, for I was satisfied that the men who had shot her and felled me to the earth, had robbed her of her valuables and thrown her body into the Ohio River. My head was terribly bruised, but I dressed it as carefully as I could, and forgot my external wound in the agony of remorse. I explained the situation to the keeper of the house, and promised him a large sum of money if he would hide and feed me for a few days. He did so, and although the police searched the house, they failed to find me. After remaining in the house several days, I concluded to leave, and did so one night at midnight. I wandered away into the darkness, caring but little about my own safety. I did not take any special pains to escape the vigilance of those in pursuit, but I did escape.

“One thing has puzzled me sorely: On the day after the death of Frossie I was given a city paper containing an account of the supposed elopement of myself and the daughter of Nathaniel Graydon. The article was quite lengthy, and I was surprised to find that Frossie’s half-sister, Terpsichore, had been an evesdropper on the bridge, and had heard my whispered conversation to Frossie. I was still more surprised that she was of the opinion that we matured plans for an

elopement, and that Frossie was a willing recipient of my words and caresses. It is true that I told Frossie that a cab and horses awaited for us on the Kentucky side, and that we could escape to some secluded spot where pursuit would be useless; but I spoke falsely for the purpose of hearing an approval. I did not receive a word in reply. The account further stated that the half-sister followed us to the Kentucky side, saw us enter a cab hitched to two white horses, which were driven swiftly away. Such an agglomeration of falsehood I have never read. I knew that Miss Terp Graydon was an inveterate falsifier, but do not understand how she could so basely deceive those who were, probably, earnestly seeking the lost girl. My theory is that Terpsichore Graydon was badly frightened by the violence of the storm, and returned to the city without seeing which way we went. I am sure that she did not follow us to the Kentucky shore, for, when we reached the end of the bridge, the lightning revealed all surroundings, and there was no one in sight in any direction. How the spinster sister can have a drop of Graydon blood in her veins and be such a great liar is a mystery to me.

“Three times in my lifetime have I tried to commit suicide; each effort was a failure, but this time I shall be successful. A dagger shall do the business, and do it well. At a late hour to-night I will drink a powerful stimulant, walk to some unfrequented place in the city, or to some place where the sidewalk is clear, and in the twinkling of an eye the deed shall be done. I shall wear no shirt, and strike my bare chest in a vital spot, without the risk of the blade being turned aside. I think one stroke will be enough; if one be not sufficient, then two will finish the deed. I am a desperate man. Wherever I go the dead girl rises up before me. By night and by day her piteous moan of pain comes to me. How beautiful she was in that dark, unlovely street, when the pitiless storm beat upon her, and she was dead. To think that I was the cause of her death; to think that I was striving to

take her away from her mother's arms, her father's tender care, the loving hearts of her sisters, and from the life of the one who loved her above all; to think of her now, lying at the bottom of the Ohio River with a bullet through her brain, food for fish, while her loving friends are, perhaps, searching for her everywhere except the right place; following a cab and two white horses, when they should be dragging the bed of the Ohio River. Then the faces of my other victims crowd around me. They were once happy and honored, now they are walking the earth with the brand of shame upon them. The voices of my poor children speak to me in murmurs of regret and moans of anguish. Oh God, my punishment is very great, but I deserve it all. To-night I shall be a free man, and I will be liberated from this cursed thing called a body. I will enter the place where all men enter, but from which none return. I shall pass to that darkness, at whose portals the sages and the wise men and the pure in heart of all time have stood, pleading in vain for just a whisper from the silence that will not break. A stranger among strangers, let me die as I have lived."

This epistle was written in a flowing, legible hand, and was signed "Paul Satalia." The handwriting was readily identified by the Graydons. This new evidence produced a decided change in the aspect of affairs, and was regarded as a message from the grave. Germain was released from custody, and a telegram was sent to Satalia's wife at Nashville, Tennessee, asking if she would have the body disinterred and sent to Nashville. To this the amiable spouse replied by telegram, "I do not want his body; bury his fiddle with him!" But her request in regard to the violin was not complied with. Terp Graydon was so enraged at being called a liar by the dead musician, that she sought the inoffensive violin and keyed the strings to such a high pitch that they were broken, and the instrument otherwise badly damaged. Her father cursed her with great fervor and originality.

Nathaniel Graydon and Germain searched the bed of the Ohio River, at a point where the body of the unfortunate girl was supposed to have been thrown in. They found the dead body of a female in a nude condition, horribly mutilated and swollen by the action of the water and from other causes, which destroyed a certainty of identification. The hair seemed to be the same color; the body in life had certainly been of similar proportions, and many points, the strongest of which were that Frossie was missing, and beyond a doubt murdered and thrown into the Ohio River. There was evidence of a gunshot wound in the face. Satalia had said it was in the temple, but in the excitement of the moment he might have been mistaken. The Graydons, after consultation, claimed the body, and it was placed in a magnificent rosewood casket and sent to their home for burial. The people of L—— having been informed of the true inwardness of the whole affair, reinstated the Graydon family in their affections, and were profusely eloquent in their offerings of condolence. Funeral services were announced to take place on the morning of the day following the arrival of the corpse. Do you wonder what was said by the family? Let me give you a few brief extracts of the conversation, on the evening before the burial. Minerva was deeply touched, and traces of suffering were plainly visible on her countenance, but she was the controlling spirit of the occasion. They were all together, including O'Leeds, seated in the drawing room.

“Oh, that my darling should die in that way,” said Nathaniel; “murdered and cast into the dark river, and no one to hinder or to help.”

And Minerva's thrilling voice replied: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whosoever believeth on me shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors.”

“But, mamma,” said Aggie, “how could the Lord allow that wicked man to steal our Frossie away?”

And the soft voice, in the language of scripture, replied: “Let thy garments be always white; man knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and they that look out of the windows be darkened; and the doors shall be shut in the street, when the sound of the grinding is low, and all the daughters of music are brought low; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the street; when the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain; then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it.”

“Oh, mamma,” cried Thalia, “what if we should never see sister again? What if the grave should hold her forever?”

And the soothing voice replied: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that we might have eternal life. Jesus said, ‘I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.’ Believe the promises, my daughter, and thou shalt be with thy sister throughout eternity. If thou dost love the Lord thou shalt see his face.”

“Faith in God does not bring our darling back to life,” said Nathaniel, gloomily.

And the low voice replied: “Nay, but it brings us up to the life of the soul, to the realm of the spirit. ‘Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.’ ‘He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment.’ Search me, oh, God! and try my heart. Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

“Your Christian fortitude in affliction is worthy of your noble self,” said O’Leeds, admiringly.

And the soft voice replied: “My strength is from God. Without him to lean upon I should fail utterly in doing my duty, as a wife and mother, in this hour, for my own heart is sorely tried. I pray daily that the Lord will give me the same courage that came to Stephen and caused him to pray for those who had stoned him to death; that caused Polycarp to praise God when the cruel flames were roasting him; that enabled early Christians to swallow melted lead; to sit in iron chairs heated red hot; that enabled them to endure the pain when the flesh was scraped from their bones with shells, and yet trust unfalteringly in the God of their salvation. My duty is to keep my children close to the side of Christ; the rest is with God. I can not comprehend His ways, but I know my duty. As my darling stood in that awful storm that night, with the evil man at her side, no doubt Jesus was with her, and as she was dying, whispered to her softly, saying: ‘Be not afraid, it is I.’ And oh, I praise His holy name that she escaped a life of shame; that she died with her good name untainted, and went to Heaven with a soul as pure as the soul of an infant.”

Minerva Graydon quoted scripture almost constantly, when her faith was tried, not always accurately, but always preserving its beauty. She was a most devout Christian, and when she read the Bible, was holding communion with God. Christ had said, “I am the way,” and she did not doubt it. She read, “Let not your heart be troubled,” and when trouble came she remembered it. She read, “Thy way is in the sea, thy path is in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known,” and when her feet were in the deep places she remembered that God had said they should be. She read again, “Whosoever cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out,” and she was comforted. She was never satisfied in doing less than her *whole* Christian duty. Like Mary, she

would sit at her Saviour's feet, with her box of precious ointment, thinking not of self gain, demanding only that she, like Mary, might hear her Lord's voice say, "She hath done what she could." Her influence over her family at this time was wonderful, beyond estimate, and of a most wholesome character. Some writer has said that "A woman without religion is like a flower without perfume," and it is even so. Nowhere in the world is the love of God so forcible, so beautiful, so infinitely and tenderly sweet, as it is when it radiates from the life of a good woman. If a woman possesses a true Christian character, she has, in every day life, an air of refinement and gentleness which she would not have otherwise. To be like Christ, to say the least, is to be an honorable man or woman, whose mission in the world is to do good. It is extremely appropriate that a mother should possess a symmetrical Christian character, and that she should shape her children's characters in pious moulds, for they will need all the help that education and example are able to give in their battle with the temptations of this world. Mother's love is more potent if permeated with the Holy Ghost, and what boy or girl would miss Heaven if mother leads the way? Mother's love! Mother's God! Mother's Bible! Mother's Christ! It is these that make home a terrestrial paradise.

Frossie Graydon's funeral services were impressive, and the floral tributes placed around the dead girl were costly and exceedingly beautiful. Society forgave now, for two reasons: First, because her innocence had been established, and, secondly, because it was attending a funeral. If the body had returned home in the bloom of health instead of in a casket, it is quite doubtful whether or not society would have forgiven her. An immense crowd followed the remains to the last resting place. Everything having been done that could be done, and the dead having been placed by the side of the Graydon ancestry, in a most lovely spot, the family endeavored to get from under the oppressive load of grief that had for so

long a time darkened their home and made it undesirable. Their efforts were not satisfactorily successful, for reasons which he will understand who has had the dearest friend snatched away by sudden death. All who have buried their hearts in the grave will understand why their efforts were unsuccessful. Have you been thus bereft? And were you not conscious, at such a time, of an unseen presence; of a presence that you longed to embrace, but could not? Did you not listen with your soul and hear the coming of dead feet and the rustle of garments laid aside forever? Did you not hear a sweet voice, dearer than all other voices, coming from some place not clearly defined, but hushing the din of the world, and thrilling you like the melody of a harp? From the lips of the wind it came and went again, and you could not recall it. You felt the pressure of fingers that stiffened awhile ago, when "the wheels of life stood still." You felt the burning gaze of eyes that have closed forever. You were alone with your dead; did you not realize it? Sometimes in turning you fancied yourself face to face with your loved one. Sometimes the dead would place a hand in yours and walk with you through the old familiar rooms of your house; you were aware of their presence, but could not quite understand it. Communion with the dead—how sweet and sacred! How hard to understand! Who denies the presence of the dead among the living, is he who has not lost his dearest friend, his heart's idol, or one who does not love at all, and is only aware of the presence of the living by contact and sight.

Thalia and Aggie tried to be brave and strong, but in vain. The best they could do was to partially conceal their sorrow from the eyes of sympathetic friends, and to give vent to their pent up grief when alone. What comfort they found in their father's counsel and what a priceless boon was their mother's advice. How like a goddess Minerva Graydon towered in her family in those dark days. Time alone assuages the sting of death. We cannot stop nor stay the tide

of our being; we may chill it for a time, or cause it to move sluggishly, but it will move, and as it recedes, it is sure to bear our sorrows away and drown them or hide them, where in time, if we find them we must seek them. It matters not how heavy our grief seems to be, the bitter duties of the world are forced upon us, and we dare not linger with our dead, lest we are shriveled by despair. So, like the poet's pensive maiden in the meadow,

“We take up the burden of life again,
Saying only, ‘it might have been.’”

Time was slow in soothing and dulling the bitter pangs that filled the souls of the Graydons. One day, nearly three months after the funeral, Nathaniel noticed Aggie, at a time when she was not aware of his presence. She was weeping bitterly, and pressed again and again to her lips a dainty lace collar, which she concealed in her bosom when through with it. He went softly away unobserved, and entered an adjoining room, and there was Thalia crying as if her heart would break. Nathaniel was unobserved for the time, and saw his daughter take from her bosom a tiny something which she kissed many times and wept over as though it was the photograph of some friend just dead; it was not a photograph, however, but a white satin garter.

CHAPTER XIII.

“THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS.”

A bud must necessarily blossom, and all blossoms must necessarily lose their fragrance and beauty. The wooing time and the days of betrothal is a bud, marriage is a blossom, and the honeymoon is the sweetest perfume of matrimony. Afterwards comes a long stretch of years in which honeymoons rise and set no more. This is the business end

of the contract, — pleasure first, and business afterwards. The honeymoon is Paradise; the balance of the time may or may not be — the other place. I believe in natural selection, and that every man should have enough good sense to make a proper selection when he contemplates matrimony. But how can a man use his judgment to advantage against feminine witchery? A man might as well try to calculate an eclipse of the sun, while a brass band at his elbow is playing “The Star Spangled Banner,” as to endeavor to use his best judgment when the woman he admires is by his side. This, as I shall undertake to prove, is correct — that people who marry each other, should have congenial spirits, in order that married life should be a desirable condition. I am acquainted with a man, a graduate of a theological seminary, who married a lovely and accomplished young lady of my acquaintance. Knowing her as I do, to be a tender and loving creature, worthy of the affections of some man of equally strong spirituality, I deem it necessary, for the happiness of his household, that he return her love, in a satisfactory way. I know, however, that he is unworthy of his trust, for I caught a glimpse of a letter he had written her only a week after their marriage. I saw only two words; they are these: “Dear Katie.” Oh, how it made my blood tingle. How could a man, and a preacher at that, after only two weeks of married life, address his wife so tamely? If he had said “My Precious Darling,” or “My Own Darling Kate,” how different would have been my estimate of him and my prophecy of his married life. In those two words, “Dear Katie,” I saw the gulf that yawned between them, and knew that he was a cold-hearted individual, incapable of meeting, halfway, the warm tide of true love that I knew was reaching towards him from the soul of his wife. By and by it will be simply “Kate,” and then “Mrs. —,” and her love will grow less demonstrative; he will get cross, and she will avoid him as much as possible; he will find fault with every domestic

arrangement, and she will tell him he is a brute; he will find some dark ewe in his flock who is more social than his wife, and she may, in self-defense, receive the attention of some sinful brother who has a kindred spirit. Such is often the process of married life when the man and woman are not mated. Therefore, I say, let the "mills of the gods" grind more rapidly,—I mean the gods of the divorce mills. When people get married they are confronted by a condition of things; this condition is sometimes blissful and sometimes otherwise. A man of business enjoys a wife who can sew, cook, mend, and is a good housekeeper. A woman who is all on fire with poetry and music needs a husband with a soul attached. Nothing is plainer than that congenial souls should be united in wedlock, and that opposites should not wed if happiness be the objective goal. I think women are of much finer fibre than men, and of course more lovable. They are sensitive and more passionate, and when aroused are more dangerous. When you take your feline house pet on your lap and softly stroke its back, how gentle and artless it seems: doubtless you notice the ermine qualities of its paws, and wonder how any one could consider them dangerously pointed. After awhile you notice pussy and the poodle in a family quarrel; the cat's back is arched, its tail points toward the polar star in a frenzy of excitement, its eyes are blazing, and its claws are more penetrating than the quills of a porcupine. In some respects a woman is like a cat; pet her and she is yours forever, act the poodle and you are her's forever. If the husband is coarse, sensual and worldly altogether, what can you expect of his wife? She will either lower to his level, or learn to endure his presence and to smother the dull pain that is destroying her earthly joy; or she will hate him. Some women are made of angel stuff, but the good in every character is circumscribed. There is a little of God and a deal of Adam in human nature. You have seen homes where wealth was profusely obvious from

the door-knocker to the attic and yet Adam had full control. You have also noticed homes, both of high and low degree, whereupon the kingdom of heaven had settled, and the fingers of God had touched the entire household. Perfect love and perfect trust are the elements of connubial bliss, if husband and wife are mutual possessors. The highest idea we have of heaven, is home; the highest idea we have of home, is heaven; and when a man and woman clasp hands and start in the winding path together, it is in their power to woo the angels from the skies, or the devils from the under world. Within themselves are the elements of weal or woe. If they are mated, it will be weal; if not, it will be woe. There is no failure so dismal as a domestic failure, and no success so prolific of good as a successful blending of two lives in matrimony.

Aggie and Thalia did not wed in September. It is more than probable that they lost sight of the fact that two young gentlemen anxiously awaited their pleasure in the matter. The wedding garments, including the ones made for Frossie, had arrived in due time, and had been laid aside, and, for a time, forgotten. The double wedding having been postponed without promise of speedy consideration, Mr. Weiler consulted Mr. O'Leeds, and remarked, "To be sure, I respect their grief, and all that, but it is sheer folly for them to keep up this long-continued strain on their nervous systems."

Unluckily for Weiler, Terp overheard him, and said: "Dear Mr. Weiler, do not take it to heart so; the girls will be all right directly, and I think Aggie will be ready for the nuptial knot in time to knit your winter socks and mend your flannels." Weiler scowled like a pirate, but said nothing. In December they were very quietly married, in the presence of only a few friends, and the two girls entered the domain of wedlock in tears. They were thinking of Frossie all the time, and wondering if her loved spirit was not present and

standing by the side of Germain, who was there, seemingly oblivious to all around him.

Nathaniel was anxious to keep the newly married couples with him, but Aggie and Zebulon concluded to reside in the dwelling which had been erected for their own special use. Thalia was glad to remain with her parents, and O'Leeds was too thoughtful of her happiness to raise any objection. Mr. Weiler was aware that it would be cheaper to reside at the family mansion, and the temptation was almost irresistible; but he feared Terp; her bitter tongue was sharper to him than a sword. She hated him, and never lost an opportunity to display her ill feeling.

Between O'Leeds and his wife, the bonds of affection became stronger as time passed away. He was carefully considerate of her every wish; always willing to sacrifice his desires for her pleasure and comfort, and always interested in her plans and purposes. How could he fail to retain her love? She, happy in his love, and strong in his strength, gave him a full measure of that wonderful love that gushed from her nature as water from a fountain.

Zebulon and wife located in a substantial and cozy dwelling in a pleasant part of the town, with good neighbors and a host of friends. They were reasonably happy for many weeks after marriage, although the honeymoon did not refulge as brightly as Aggie's poetical temperament desired. I think the trouble commenced about three months after their marriage, in this way: One evening they were seated at their card table, and had finished their last game for the evening. By way of digression allow me to say they had a card table, and, also a family altar; and that Aggie was more fervent at family prayers than at euchre. Zebulon's ideas were that cards are harmless, and games of chance harmless, as long as money was not used. You are aware that great men need their hours of relaxation from business cares, and Weiler wanted to relax as economically as possible. But as I was

saying, the cards were laid aside for the evening, and Aggie seated herself on an ottoman at his side, unloosed her wonderful black hair, and laid her head in his lap. The wind was howling dismally around the house, and the girl-wife was soon in a poetical frame of mind.

“Oh, Zebulon, there is nothing to me so sublime as the voices of the storm. What feelings of passionate grief and passionate love come to me in the voices of the storm. It is the language of the living and the language of the dead. What feelings of awe and reverence fill my soul as the wind ebbs and flows, bringing voices from the city of the dead, telling of joys departed, of friendships blighted, of hopes that withered when the chilling breeze of death claimed its own; voices from loved ones who died all too soon; voices from the cities of the world, telling of shame and misery and human woe; voices of the lambs who have found shelter and safety within the Shepherd’s bosom; voices of humanity, out in the storm, crying for help and calling us to earthly vineyards of the Lord.”

Weiler was amazed at this outburst of what he deemed sheer effeminacy.

“Oh, Zebulon, I lie awake at night sometimes, when the wind is moaning, and can hear sister’s voice sobbing through the branches of the garden trees, and ebbing away as weirdly as a dream. Oh! to think that I shall never hear her dear voice again, except as it comes in the breeze; never see her bright eyes again, except when I look at the stars; never hear her laughter, except when I stand by woodland streams and hear the soft waters rippling over its pebbly bed; never hear her whispers of confiding love, except when I stand beneath the forest trees and listen to the soft summer winds passing by.”

“My dear,” said Weiler to his now weeping wife, “wind is a mode of motion, an element of force. When a force strikes a solid substance, sound is emitted. Thus when it

comes in contact with the boughs of a tree it makes a noise in accordance with its velocity. Flowing waters contain the elements of force, and, coming in contact with the rocks, produce a sound, but I fail to detect in it any resemblance to the human voice. Your sister's eyes were a velvety blue, and the stars are saffron-hued; now, how can you see her eyes in them? No, my dear, I think your imagination is entirely too strong for your own good. Too much poetry is not a good thing in a small family."

Aggie was greatly shocked at her husband's lack of sentiment and apparent coarseness, but replied quietly:

"Dear Zebulon, do you not admire poetry?"

"It's a good thing in its place, my dear."

"Where is its proper place?"

"On the shelves of book stores."

"Oh Zebulon, how can you talk so? What would home be without a volume of poems under every chair, upon every sofa, and in every conceivable place from garret to basement?"

"It would undoubtedly present a more attractive appearance in the way of neatness and order."

Somewhat nettled: "Mr. Weiler, do you not admire Shakespeare? Everybody loves his writings."

"Never read a line of Shakespeare in my life."

"But surely you are fond of Dante?"

"Pon honor, I am not."

"How about Milton? Surely you are familiar with 'Paradise Lost.'"

"Have heard of the poem, but can't say that I admire it."

"Surely you have read Tasso's 'Jerusalem Delivered?'"

"Never heard of Tasso nor his poem. Am glad, however, that Jerusalem was delivered."

"Have you read Homer's 'Iliad?'"

"Never wasted any time on Homer."

"Have you read Pope's 'Essay on Man?'"

"Who is Pope? The name is familiar, but I can't place him."

“Have you read ‘The Beauties of DeQuincy?’”

“Again I answer in the negative.”

“Have you read Moore’s ‘Lallah Rookh?’”

“I have not.”

“Have you read any of Horace’s great poems?”

“I once read something written by Horace Mann, but it was not poetry.”

“Have you read Virgil to any extent?”

“Indeed I have not.”

“Have you read any of the Greek and Syrian Tragedies?”

“Never, never!”

“Have you read Johnson’s ‘Rasselas,’ a prose poem all the way through?”

“Never heard of Johnson, either.”

“Have you read Campbell’s ‘Pleasures of Hope?’”

“Never!”

“Gray’s ‘Elegy?’”

“Never!”

“Tennyson’s ‘Princess?’”

“Never!”

“Arnold’s ‘Light of Asia?’”

“Never!”

“Have you read the Book of Job?”

“Never!”

“Lamentations of Jeremiah?”

“Never!”

“Isaiah?”

“Never!”

“Songs of David?”

“Never!”

“Ezekiel, Moses, or Solomon?”

“Never!”

“Have you read Whitman’s ‘Blades o’ Grass?’”

“No; I understand that Whitman is crazy.”

“Have you read anything written by any of the great Indiana writers?”

“My dear, life is very short; let’s go to bed.”

“Zebulon, what have you read?”

“Not much poetical prose, and only one poem. I read that when a boy at school; it was something about a lamb. Have read one novel by Roe, some scientific works, and the Congressional Globe regularly. I think this is the sum total of my literary attainments.”

Aggie was disgusted and appalled by this revelation; was she to spend the balance of a lifetime with a man whose only knowledge of refined literature had been wrested from one of Roe’s novels? It was too much, almost, to endure, and she was striving hard to restrain optical moisture when Zebulon again suggested the propriety of retiring for the night.

One incident of that eventful evening, when the wife and husband entered widely diverging paths, is worthy of record. After retiring, when Zebulon was almost asleep, this happened:

“Zebulon, will you kiss me good night?”

“To be sure, I will—there!”

The idea of a new husband forgetting to kiss his wife good night. Oh! the brute!

I think that was the beginning of the trouble, but it was not the beginning of the end. From that hour the husband was lowered in the wife’s estimation. She could talk, think, and dream of nothing except literature, while he was heavy, practical, and devoted to business. She floated around the house in a dreamy, listless way, and was out of the body too much to be a good housekeeper. He loved order and neatness in all things. She was interested in things celestial; he was interested in things terrestrial. She was ethereal, and saw everything from a spiritual standpoint. His pleasures were terrigenous, and his possessions were terraqueous. Her soul was fed on ambrosial fruits and cherub nectar; his soul and body were inseparable, and were fed upon the same diet. When Zebulon wanted to talk about corn and hogs, Aggie

wanted to converse about Greek mythology. When he was concerned about the crops, she was with Lallah Rookh in the "Vale of Cashmere," or with Johnson's Persian Princess in the "Happy Valley."

One morning the wife endeavored to prepare breakfast for her leige lord, in the absence of their only servant. It was a very good breakfast, too, only the biscuits had a trifle too much soda in them, and Weiler said:

"These biscuits are certainly of mundane origin, Mrs. Weiler; poetry and breadstuff should never be mixed."

"Indeed! Then perhaps, Mr. Weiler, I had better not meddle with culinary affairs hereafter?"

"It would probably be the correct thing for you to either abandon your sentimental nonsense, or leave the household affairs in the hands of the servant girl," said the surly boor.

You see the trouble between them was coming to a head, and these words, spoken by him with heat and emphasis, were the forerunner of a quarrel. It did not come all at once, and as usual both were to blame, although I do not see how Aggie could avoid quarreling, or being cross at times, when Weiler in his efforts to lower his wife to his own extremely practical ideas of domestic life, would give utterance to the most exasperating jeers and taunts; but the little woman was very brave and managed to conceal her rebellious spirit from the gaze of the outside world. Even Terp was a whole year in finding out the true state of affairs. It came to her in this way: One evening, while making a friendly call, having goaded Weiler to a frenzy, she was serenely striving to draw him to the point of profanity, at which place she always drew the line.

"My dear Mr. Weiler," she said, "what a fortunate thing it is for yourself and wife that your temperaments are compatible. How many domestic difficulties develop simply because of incompatibility of temperament. When you were

married I said to myself, 'How fortunate Aggie is in securing Mr. Weiler for a husband.' Says I, 'She is passionately fond of literature, and Zebulon is so poetical and classical in disposition, that they will enjoy wedded life with commensurate zeal'."

"Indeed," Zebulon replied, "I am highly flattered with the interest you manifest in my welfare; but perhaps you are mistaken as to the mutuality of our literary proclivities."

"Certainly not, Mr. Weiler. On the occasion of your wedding, I said to poor dear Germain, who has never smiled since the day he lost Frossie, says I, 'Weiler is an intellectual giant,' but he only laughed, and said, 'Weiler is a fool; just like an oyster, content to exist without knowing why.' 'Oh no,' says I, 'I am sure Zebulon is a gentleman of great refinement, only he is so modest he will not reveal it to the vulgar gaze of the world. Modesty, you know, is an evidence of greatness; still waters run deep, and you know that some of the most eminent men the world has produced have been shy, awkward, excessively modest in personal appearance, and repulsive in conversation.' 'No, no,' says I, 'if a man be as hopelessly flat as a turtle, mellow as a clam, or unattractive as a porcupine, it is not proof that he is intellectually dull or stupid. Such a one may possess genius of the highest order, and be like the king's daughters, all glorious within.'"

"Do you mean to insult me in my own house?" cried Zebulon, very red in the face.

"I never dreamed of such a thing, Mr. Weiler, but was simply trying to pay you a merited compliment that your wife might feel prouder and happier over the treasure she garnered at Hymen's altar."

"As for my wife, she is my personal and private property, and —"

"At least you have a chattel mortgage on her," interrupted Terp.

Weiler continued, frowning fiercely: "She shall obey me in household matters. On that point I am determined. A woman who is about to become a mother, I think, should regard it her imperative duty to impress upon her offspring what is useful and practical."

"That's true," said Terp, benignly; "early impressions are lasting; but what would you do in order that your posterity may inherit the intellectual and spiritual strength of paternity?"

"In order that my child should be a useful citizen," snapped Weiler, "I would burn every volume of poems in the house, destroy every novel, and all books of a light and trifling character, smash the piano, take the pictures from the walls, and hide the gaudy ornaments so that my child's first impressions should be that life is real and earnest."

"And the grave is not the goal?" added Terp.

"As I was saying," continued Zebulon, "my wife is my private and personal property —"

"Beast! idiot! puppy!" cried Aggie, who, until now, had been a silent listener; "I despise you, and curse the day I first met you!"

And the spirited beauty flounced out of the room, locked herself in her library, and had a good cry, all to herself. Terp said:

"Are you sure, Zebulon, that your wife is your own personal and private property?"

You see the breach was becoming wider and wider, as the days passed along. The butterfly had turned upon the one that sought to mutilate its beautiful wings, and the wife hated the husband as intensely as she had once loved him. Persons who love without limit, can hate with equal abandon.

After awhile the baby came, and Aggie knew that it was the very sweetest, darlingest little cherub in the whole world. Aunt Terp said so; Aunt Thalia said so; Uncle Tiberius said so; grandpa said so; grandma said so, and everybody said so

except Weiler; that individual had had no experience with babies, and was struck with terror at the disadvantages of having a new baby in the house, and the additional expense in consequence thereof. He grumbled because it was not a boy — not that he admired boys, but because he thought them less expensive than girls. If he had had control of the matter, the entire population of the globe would be of the male persuasion, and each child would be sixteen years of age at the time of birth.

Not long after the addition to the Weiler family, Thalia gave birth to a bouncing girl, and Tiberius O'Leeds was quite silly for a time. Terpsichore was distressed on account of the advent of this child, because, she said, it will be just as she predicted, the house would soon be full of children. Six months later she said, in a spasm of disgust: "Dear me, how I dislike babies, the little puky things. What a nuisance Thalia's baby is to be sure, crying half the time and spewing milk the other half. When I see Thalia trundling a baby cab down the walk, with a grip-sack full of diapers always at hand, looking so much like a born slave, I am almost tempted never to get married." And she shook her gray curls with great firmness.

Aggie's affections twined around her child, and all the wealth of her soul belonged to the baby; it did not bring the husband any closer. He never seemed to care for the child, except to know that it was properly clothed, that is, he allowed his wife a certain amount of money for its clothing. His inattention to the child caused the mother to dislike him more, if possible, than ever. She had learned one way to master some of Zebulon's ideas of domestic economy. As I have said, he stood in mortal fear of Terp; for instance:

"Mr. Weiler, please stop at the store to-day and get me a pair of six-button kids. My old ones are shabby."

"Mrs. Weiler, allow me to say that I will do nothing of the kind. The gloves you have are good enough. I do not believe in wasting money in that way."

“Mr. Weiler, will you please stop at father’s as you go down, and tell Terpsichore I want her to spend the evening with me?”

The gloves were forthcoming, but Terp was not.

Again: “Mr. Weiler, will you stop at Mrs. M——’s millinery store to-day and pay her for the bonnet I have selected? The one I was looking at yesterday. Tell her to send it to me this afternoon, as I purpose using it this evening.”

“Mrs. Weiler, I will do nothing of the kind. You shall not squander my money in that way. This reckless extravagance must cease.”

Aggie penciled a few lines upon a slip of paper and gave it to him.

“Will you please hand this note in at papa’s? It is for Terp.”

On the way to his business Weiler read the note, it said: “Dear Terpsichore.—Please call this evening and take tea with us.”

The bonnet arrived in due time, but Terp did not.

“Mr. Weiler, will you stop at D.’s book store and get me the new book, ‘Half Hours with the Great Poets’?”

“Never, Mrs. Weiler, never! not another penny of my money shall be invested in such trash.”

“Mr. Weiler, will you please inform Terpsichore that I shall expect her to dine with us to-day?”

“Half Hours with the Great Poets” was added to Aggie’s library that day, but Terp did not dine with them.

So, you see, our little woman was quite a diplomat, in her way, and was shrewd enough to supply her every need, and outwit a miserly husband, who was fast becoming a monomaniac on the subject of household economy. But I am sorry to say that her constant combat with carnal minds temporarily damaged the gentleness of her spirit, and did much to hide the poetry of her nature.

CHAPTER XIV.

“AND THE DARKNESS COMPREHENDETH IT NOT.”

When baby Weiler number one was about two years of age, baby Weiler number two made its appearance. It was a boy, much to the gratification of Mr. Weiler. Having determined to keep his expenditures down to a limited amount, he was anxious to curtail and economize to a greater extent than ever after the advent of baby number two, and became almost brutal in his home life. What a hell on earth is a home where the husband and wife are at swords' points and the ferine qualities of human nature out-general the best judgment and best desires of the heart and brain.

One day when number two was about six months old, Zebulon was unusually surly and abusive to his wife. They quarreled at breakfast and at the dinner hour. During the afternoon Aggie quietly set the house in order, discharged their only servant, and penned the following note, which she left where her husband would be sure to find it:

“Mr. Weiler: Henceforth we dwell apart. I will no longer consent to be your slave. I will no longer associate with a man whose instincts are so narrow and brutal. I and my children will live with my parents. It will be useless for you to follow. I will not return.

AGALAI WEILER.”

A very trim little party of three, consisting of a bright-eyed, black-haired little woman and two babies, arrived at the Graydon place late in the afternoon, with the avowed purpose of making it their future home. Aggie recited her story with thrilling effect. Minerva was deeply grieved, and Nathaniel registered an oath to thrash Weiler on sight. The domestic difficulties of the unhappy pair had been so well concealed by the courageous daughter that her father and the family did not know to what extent the husband and wife were estranged. It is true that their troubles were not altogether a

secret, and a decided coolness had sprung up between Graydon and Weiler, but Nathaniel was not aware of the insufferable and brutal ways of his son-in-law until Aggie fled to him for protection.

It will never be known exactly what Zebulon Weiler thought or said when he found his wife's note, his nest empty and the birds flown. That his wife could beshrew him was beyond his comprehension. I suppose he thought she should be willing to endure his surly mood and selfish ways during a long lifetime, without complaint; and for the first time he realized that he was in the condition of the canine who had been "barking up the wrong tree." Now, the people would talk, and the littleness of his character would be revealed. He was in great despair, but his opinions of himself, and his ideas of domestic economy, were but little changed. He was sure his wife was in the wrong, and blamed himself only for not being shrewd enough to know that long continued domestic asperity will end always in much the same way, to wit: in violence and separation.

But he was determined not to lose his wife and babies; and, being a prudent man, and well acquainted with Nathaniel's temerity of action, when aroused by real or fancied insult or injustice, wrote a lengthy letter, rather than hazard his anatomy in close quarters. This letter was addressed to Nathaniel, and sent by a small boy. In it he claimed that he was not altogether responsible for the present state of his wife's feelings, and hoped the friends concerned would "suspend judgment until they had listened to his side of the case." On the morrow he would call and see if the matter could not be adjusted without publicity. On the morrow he presented himself at the Graydon mansion, and was not cordially received. He was allowed audience with only Nathaniel and Minerva, and noticed, with alarm, that the former held a stout cane in his hand, and wore heavy boots, which, though nicely polished, were double-soled. It makes con-

siderable difference to a man who is liable to get kicked, whether the prospective kicker wears double-soled shoes or not; and Zebulon was decidedly nervous as he entered the house and seated himself in a position where he would have a fair chance at the door in case of necessity.

“Zebulon Weiler,” said Nathaniel, with a bitterness he did not try to conceal, “you are here on a fool’s errand, and you have disgraced yourself and my family. I know the entire truth of the matter, and had I been in possession of the facts at the proper time, my daughter would have left you long ago. You have acted more like a brute than an honorable man, and you are a puppy, sir, a contemptible puppy!” And the stout cane thumped the floor with an energy which made Zebulon quake with terror.

“My dear sir,” cried he, fawningly, “there has been a great misunderstanding, a very grave misunderstanding, and I assure you that it is not altogether my fault. I acknowledge that I am somewhat to blame for the condition of things, but not altogether; will you hear my explanation?”

“Thee must state thy case, and state it plainly,” said Minerva, quietly but firmly.

“Thank you. To begin, I will state that I am a man of strong convictions, and love neatness and order above all things in domestic life. My wife is just the reverse.”

“Sir?” said Nathaniel, holding his cane threateningly.

“I beg your pardon,” said Zebulon, hastily. “I hardly know how to tell the story without telling it all. It is my habit to make a memoranda, or diary, of household events, in order that I may regulate my household affairs advisedly and correctly. I will read, with your permission, a few extracts from my notes, so that you may see how my household affairs have been managed.

“Feb. 1st: Came to dinner very tired. Found the house cold, and my wife and children visiting a neighbor’s.

“Feb. 2d: Came to dinner at 11:30 A. M.; found my

wife on a sofa reading a novel, by Diderot. The room was in great confusion. The oldest child, Frossie, had smashed the mandoline on a cuspidore, at a cost of ten dollars and more. Asked Aggie why she did n't care for the child, and tidy the room; said she had been bothered with the child all morning, and did not care if it broke everything in the house as long as it did n't squeal.

“Feb. 3d: My wife is very cross to-day; has called me a brute three times, a beast twice, and a crocodile once. I think she intends asking me for money; if she does, I will refuse.

“Feb. 4th: Baby had the croup last night. Succeeded in getting it to vomit, and it was greatly relieved, but my wife insisted upon having a physician anyway. Was compelled to go out at midnight and search the town for medical aid. Doctor came, examined child, and pronounced it out of danger. Dead loss of two dollars, besides loss of sleep and great inconvenience.

“Feb. 5th: This was a rough day in the family. Brought three friends home to dine with me. Found my wife in the reception room flat on a lounge, writing a poem on ‘When the leaves begin to bud.’ She was in shabby *negligee*, so oblivious to her surroundings that she did not notice our entrance. One of her slippers lay upon the floor, and her dress being disarranged at the bottom, exposed a shockingly dirty pair of stockings, and the foot of the slipperless one was full of holes. Her front hair was in papers, and the bosom of her dress open, just as the child had left it. Altogether she presented a shockingly untidy appearance. Of course I could not control my temper, for I do not care to present my wife to friends *en dishabille*, and told her so. Quarreled the balance of the day at every opportunity, and will probably quarrel all night.

“Feb. 6th: To-day my wife wrote a poem entitled ‘Evening Bells.’ Every line begins with ‘Oh,’ and the baby

was yelling all the time with a pin sticking half way through its leg. Would have quarreled over it, but Terpsichore came down to spend the afternoon and evening.

“Feb. 7th: Returned to the house at 10 o'clock A. M., and found Aggie making herself up for the day. The oldest child was playing with the French clock, or what was left of it; as I came in she was thumping it vigorously with a pair of tongs, and crying ‘Boo! boo!’ My wife’s hair switch hung on the back of a chair, and I noticed a fine rug almost on fire and smoking badly. Examined it, and found a red-hot curling iron, seized it, threw it out of doors, and said damn it. Wife said it was too hot for use, and had laid it on the rug to cool. Said the baby was cross, and had given it the clock to keep it quiet. Rug and clock ruined. Swore again. Cost enormous.

“Feb. 8th: The Misses B. and C. made a social call this afternoon; was at home, invited them into the parlor, my wife being up stairs. Miss B., who is a timid creature, and quite stylish, walked over to the sofa and seated herself with great dignity. Sprang up instantly, yelling like a Comanche; had seated herself on a black and tan terrier, which Aggie insists on keeping in the house. Wife came in and said, ‘Poor doggie!’ Was dressed in anything she could find in a hurry. Ladies left abruptly, and will probably not be friendly for some time.

“Feb. 9th: My wife poked a green painted card into the parrot’s cage this morning. At noon Polly was dead. Do not regard its death altogether accidental. I was very fond of the parrot.

“Feb 10th: Mrs. Weiler carelessly left a twenty dollar muff on the parlor floor this A. M. The terrier found it, and chewed it until it was entirely ruined. Told Aggie what the dog had done, and she said, ‘Poor fellow; perhaps he was hungry!’ Will hire a man to shoot the dog to-morrow. Can’t stand it much longer.

“Feb. 11th: Found my wife, at noon, reading Edgar A. Poe’s ‘Gold Bug.’ The babies were yelling lustily, and the room was in a state of confusion. Shoes, stockings, baby underwear, and many other things were strewn around over the floor. Her bare elbows were actually sticking through holes in her sleeves. Asked her why she did not have the room placed in proper shape, and she said she had n’t noticed anything being out of shape or presenting an untidy appearance.

“Feb. 12th: Terpsichore called early in the morning to stay all day. Dined up town, and did not come home until after bed-time.

“Feb. 13th: Found cat hairs in the buscuit this morning; wife scolded the hired girl about it, and girl left for more congenial quarters. Wife said she would do the cooking for awhile. Thought it was a good idea until dinner time. After dinner found another cook. No serious outbreak is liable to occur before morning.

“Feb. 14th: Entered the nursery to-day, and was astonished to find my finest suit of clothing — a broadcloth suit, just from the shop — in very bad shape. My wife had made a stuffed paddy of it, placed it in one corner, and put my silk hat on the top of it. Asked her what it all meant, and she said it was baby’s valentine. It was roughly handled and was smeared with milk and sewing machine oil. Oh, ye gods, how long will this thing continue?

“Feb. 15th: Mrs. Weiler informed me to-day that she intended to publish a volume of original poems, and showed me the title page, ‘The Soul of the Asphodel, and other poems, by Mrs. Agalaia Graydon Weiler, author of many unpublished works.’ She said the most difficult thing about publishing a book was to sell it, and that she intended to give the first edition away to members of her International Literary Society, that they all expected a gratis copy, and it would probably place the second edition on the market.

Asked her how much the first edition would cost. She said about six hundred dollars. Asked her where she intended to get the money, and she said she had a husband who was able to foot the bill. Told her not by a d—n sight. She said if I wouldn't her papa would, and told me to bring her a package of lead pencils from the book store, as she wanted to finish her poem, 'The White Rose of Sharon,' that afternoon. Told her I would not spend a cent on her silly book. Told me to stop and invite Terp to spend the evening at our house. Blamed if I will!

"Feb. 16: Found my wife to-day in the parlor shivering with cold, and in a most deplorable condition, seated in a large arm chair; hair down and disheveled, wild-eyed, and with an awful goneness about her general appearance. Asked her if she was sick, and she simply said, 'No!' pulled her shabby morning gown about her, and resumed her abstracted and out-of-the-flesh appearance. Demanded an explanation of her singular conduct, and found that she was composing a poem entitled, 'The Minstrel's Curse,' written for the pages of the 'Soul of the Asphodel.'

"Feb. 17: Mrs. Weiler accompanied me to the opera this evening. She was absent-minded, and, in seating herself, sat plump down upon my friend Jones' plug hat. Instead of apologizing to Jones, as I supposed she would, she snatched the tile from the seat and flung it up the aisle, with manifest ill-humor. Jones turned as red as a beet, but said nothing. When at home again, I asked her how she enjoyed the opera. Said she couldn't recollect much about it, as her mind was wholly occupied with the poem she was writing, to be called, 'The Collar She used to Wear!' and to be a part of the 'Soul of the Asphodel.'

"Feb. 18th: This has been a gloomy day. The hired girl is sick, and the house is turned upside down from cellar to garret. Was obliged to order dinner from a restaurant, while my wife was trying to find a proper word to rhyme with

magnolia. She could n't find it, and was very cross. Had to wash the dinner dishes, and feed the babies with a spoon. At supper time found the rooms still unswept, the beds still unmade, my wife still wearing her morning gown, and the hired girl too sick to prepare supper. Asked Aggie to get our evening meal ready; said she had n't time. Asked her what she was doing; said she had just finished her poem entitled, 'The Cosmorama of the South Winds,' and had a stanza written on another poem, to be called 'When the Swallows Cease to Twitter,' both poems to be a part of the 'Soul of the Asphodel.' Asked her how long this state of affairs would exist, and she said probably six months. Asked her if she thought I was a fool, and she said yes. I swear by the eternal gods this idiotic business must stop. I will submit to it no longer. This is my house, and I shall assert my rights; my wife shall understand that I am master and ruler of my own household."

"Hold on, Mr. Weiler!" interrupted Nathaniel; "you struck my daughter, next day, according to her testimony; you struck her like the dog you are, and you shall smart for it."

"Indeed, I did not strike her," cried the terrified Zebulon, who noticed that his father-in-law was preparing for action; "it was this way: we were quarreling, and she, in a frenzy of excitement, threw a tin full of cold tea in my face; unthoughtedly I endeavored to wrest the tin from her grasp, and in doing so she struck her arm against the wall; I am heartily ashamed of the whole affair, but I can show you by the remainder of my diary for the month of February, that my domestic affairs were badly disarranged by my wife's literary pursuits; that she was completely addled after commencing to write and compile her book of poems; that my house, which I aimed to present a tidy and comfortable appearance at all times, was constantly in a state of disorder; that my wife neglected her children and disregarded the wishes of her

husband, in order that she could write sentimental stuff and nonsense, for people who are made of mouse stuff, and have no part in the business affairs of the world. As I said, I am a man of business, and a man who loves order and —”

“And I,” said Nathaniel, “am a man of muscle, and one who can defend the honor of his family, d—n you —”

Mr. Weiler sought safety in flight, and fled through the door precipitately, but not before Nathaniel had succeeded in planting a substantial kick in Zebulon’s dorsal regions. Mr. Weiler’s Homeric bellow sounded like that of a mad bull of the pennyroyal persuasion.

Minerva interfered, and Nathaniel was soon under control, and heartily ashamed of the manner in which he had conducted himself in the presence of his wife, for he was more concerned about retaining the esteem and respect of his wife, than he was to keep himself spotless in the eyes of the world. When his anger had somewhat subsided, he sought the “Book of the House of Graydon,” and searched for a precedent for the conduct of his daughter. All along the line of Drivers he could find quarrels and divorces. Along the line of Graydons he found several cases of domestic infelicity, as he did, also, among the Eldridge’s, but none seemed applicable to the case. Away back somewhere among the branches of the family tree, he found the following :

“Zerelda, daughter of —, dwelt in the tent of Ben Hadad; milked the goats of Kedar, and made butter in a skin churn. Ben Hadad entered his tent one evening and asked the tender-eyed Zerelda for a drink of goat’s milk wherewith to slake his thirst, but Zerelda brushed her night-flowing tresses aside and answered softly, ‘Are not the children of Ben Hadad of more concern than the father, and what with shall *they* quench *their* thirst if thou dost drink first from the churn? Ben Hadad was wrath, and said, ‘go to,’ and seizing the churn drank the children’s food from it until it was empty. Zerelda in her wrath smote Ben Hadad upon the skull with a wrinkled water skin, and he wailed in bitterness of spirit. By and by, he arose in anger and left his tent door forever. Gathering together his men servants, and his maid servants, and his oxen, and his asses, and his

camels, he went his way into a far country. Zerelda was left alone in her tent, and was many years desolate. Her food was milk from the goats of Kedar and wild honey, and her clothing lamb's wool and goat skins."

"Thus history repeats itself in all families," said Nathaniel, as he replaced his precious book in its proper place.

Minerva's influence was exercised to its fullest extent in this unhappy affair. Her zeal and good sense prevented a separation, and saved them from exposure. Aggie was completely humbled, and returned to her home in tears, resolving to do her whole duty as a wife and mother, which she did.

Zebulon was aware that his reputation was at stake, and, being determined to maintain his standing in the community, was careful not to arouse his wife's anger by brutal treatment. I once noticed, in a menagerie, a den which contained a bear and a leopard. They had been trained to live peacefully together, but did so under protest. Such was the condition of Weiler and his wife. Minerva gave them a large share of her attention, and the warm-hearted daughter was ever willing to be guided by mother's counsel. So I think they could have lived together peacefully, or at least so quietly that the world would never know of their differences for a long number of years. But one day Mr. Zebulon Weiler was mixed up in a railroad accident, and had his fool head mashed from his shoulders.

Thus Aggie was left a pensive widow.

CHAPTER XV.

AN OBJECT LESSON.

On the fourth day of July, in the year of our Lord 18—, in the evening of the day aforesaid, a pilgrim stood on the banks of the Ohio River, in a dreamy, uncertain kind of way, dimly conscious that he had been, and was even then,

celebrating the national holiday with too much enthusiasm and patriotic intensity. The marks of inebriety were plainly visible on his otherwise handsome countenance, and the indications were that his Fourth of July celebration was but the continuation of a perennial and progressive state of intoxication. The end of to-day's drunk was, with him, the beginning of to-morrow's drunk, and the continuity of his efforts to attain unattainable heights of bliss *via* the jug route, had been surprisingly brilliant and tenaciously zealous.

When all the joy of this life has simmered down into a gutta percha flask, and human bliss can be corked up and stowed away in one's pistol pocket; and one can obtain happiness, fame, good cheer, riches, honors, warm friendships, and the Spartan fires of patriotism, by simply pulling the stopper out, then, according to his philosophy, one would be a fool to decline the proffered offerings of Bacchus. If a man pickles himself in French brandy and Holland gin, his intellectual faculties are sure to ripen morbidly, and everything looks wrong from eyes bleared with rum and weakened by dissipation. A drunkard is, indeed, a sick man, and his disease will surely lay him away, unless that good, old-time physician, common sense, administers an allopathic dose. For years this man had been a tramp, and, during his professional career as such, had made a tour of the world, or, at least, that portion of the globe dotted over by school houses and churches. He was a journeyman printer, and was, of course, obliged to keep within the charmed circle of newspaper influences, in order to live. In the Eastern States he had not fared well. Work scarce, wages low, and employers absurdly opposed to the use of ardent spirits. In the West and Northwest he was in clover; his surroundings being more congenial and home-like. In the South he had found everything strangely un-American, and society existing with but little aid from newspapers and public schools. Hunting for a school-house in the South, in the rural districts, was much like hunt-

ing four-leaved clover, and newspapers, on an average, were two hundred miles apart. He soon found that a typoreal tour through the Southern States of America was not a desirable thing for a man with an appetite demanding attention and supply. Once he had a home, but that was long ago, so long ago that he had almost forgotten about it, and he was a cosmopolitan in the strict sense of the word. Once he had been of good repute among his fellow-workmen, and had always sustained a first-class reputation as a printer and fast compositor. When at work, he lessened the quantity of his potations, and was abundantly able to execute any ordinary or extraordinary task known to the craft. Therefore, force of circumstances did not compel him to become a nomad among his fellows, or cause him to peregrinate in search of daily food. By nature he was a gentleman of classical attainments, and even King Alcohol had failed to eradicate the designs of nature's God. He was built on the correct plan, but his manhood was like wheat among tares, hidden by its surroundings. Physically he was rather prepossessing in spite of his bloated appearance. When he walked, a defect in his gait was noticeable, caused by reason of a cork leg. He had left the missing limb on one of the bloody battlefields of the Rebellion. He was rather above the medium height, with wavy, dark hair, streaked with gray, and eyes that were piercingly black and blood-shot. His face was clean shaven, and notwithstanding the fact that he presented a battered and worn appearance, and his clothing was threadbare, he was scrupulously neat and clean. He was aware that soap and water were plentiful and cheap, and that all men, even tramps, could obtain enough of both articles to keep their clothing and bodies spotless. A common straw hat covered his head, and a pair of dry-weather shoes his feet, and, as he stood thus, on the banks of the Ohio River, he was not so unattractive as the average tramp. He was a tramp, however, for a' that, and, as I was saying, he was dimly conscious that he was a

degree drunker than usual. In fact, he had been drunk all day in the superlative degree, but he was not overwhelmingly intoxicated. His luggage consisted of a package of cheese and crackers and a bottle of rye whisky. The package he carried in his hand, the bottle in his pocket. The sun was down, and the tramp felt the need of a good bath before partaking of his frugal meal. He doubted his ability to bathe successfully under the circumstances, but, drunk or sober, he was a man of strong will power, and, finding a suitable place, disrobed and entered the water in his own original style. In other days he had been an expert swimmer, but the loss of his limb made it impossible for him to be as graceful and so much at home in the water as in former times. Having splashed around to his heart's content without accident, he returned to the shore much refreshed. As the shades of night began to settle he entered the wood and strayed quite a distance into its depths, in search of a suitable place to spend the night. Having found it, he seated himself upon the ground, laid aside his shoes, and prepared to eat his meal of cheese and crackers. He pulled his flask, placed it upon the ground, and stuck a tiny flag staff, from the top of which waved a tiny flag, into the stopper of the bottle, complacently remarking: "The Star Spangled Banner waves over the most abject slavery in the world, the serfdom of the bottle, and (philosophically) long may she wave."

Now, this tramp was not obliged to subsist on cheese and crackers, nor to travel on foot; but, when he was drinking heavily, he did both from choice. In his pocket-book was a reasonably large sum of money—large for a tramp to possess—and being of a generous disposition, wherever he found a printing office he found friends, and generally work. Perhaps a biographical sketch of his life would be of interest, but for the purposes of this story it will not be necessary. Having satisfied the cravings of his appetite, he folded his coat for a pillow, and laid down to rest at the roots of a tree.

After a long time he drank from the bottle, and became loquacious in communing with himself:

“*Les misérables* is French for always miserable; wonder what the French is for always drunk? Perhaps its *les misérables*, also, for I’ve been drunk ever since the Rebellion, and have robbed myself of everything desirable in this life. There’s nothing left of me now, save an appetite for gin; everything went when my desire to live a respectable life passed away, and my desire to be useful and respectable did not die within me until the demon of drink had me safe in his clutches. But why should I care? Life is a fraud, a vain delusion and a snare. Death is a soft snap. Time is but a tinkle of eternity, and the grave is only a niche cut in the walls of eternal silence, a splendid resting couch in a dark pavillion of everlasting peace. Friendship is a name for something hard to understand, and of little value; a thing that unbars to knaves the palaces of our affections, and enables them to steal away our treasures. To live is to be miserable; to die is to sink to the confines of oblivion; to love is to be betrayed; to hate is to suffer the pangs of the damned; to labor is to toil in vain for things we can not have; to be idle is to become as turtles in the mud; to be ambitious is to pave a way for constant failure and distress; to have no ambitious desires to better our condition, is to become like the dog or ass; to be virtuous and noble, is to be above the world in which your neighbor lives and has his being; to dwell with the wicked and embrace sin as a dear friend, is to suffer constant pain; to have friends, is to be deceived and plundered; to be without friends is worse than being dead. Oh, how I hate everybody! No, I mean how I love everybody. I hate them because they seem happy and contented, and love them because I know they are not so, and their outward show is but a seeming. I know that a blissful seeming is not a reality, for whatever route a man takes to reach the gardens of pleasure, supposed to exist in the lives of the pure in heart, he

must encounter perils and mishaps. Whichever path he enters, he will surely find obstacles to overcome, and snarling beasts will be in the way. It makes no difference where a man's lot may be cast, or whether he be rich or poor, he must receive his allotted share of misery. By analogy, I know that all men are miserable, because I am miserable when I am sober; but why should any one be miserable as long as the worm of the still is able to furnish the foundations of genuine happiness?"

Here he removed the stopper and drank copiously.

"Alas, that my only joy is corked up in a bottle! A certain Temanite once said to Job, 'Shall a wise man fill his belly with east wind?' A wise man would be less than wise should he do so when a bottle of Bourbon whisky is at hand. But I will not speak well of rum. No, it is my destroyer. It has led me into the dark ways of life, and dug a pit into which I have fallen. It has made me a vagabond and a tramp, a something for all men to laugh at. I was not always in this shape; I can dream of other days when the flush of youth was on my cheeks; when desire beat high and ambition was beyond control. But that was long ago, and the gone days come as echoes—sweet in contrast with present bitterness. There's no use sighing over the what-might-have-beens or the what-could-have-beens, nor the what-ought-to-have-beens, for man is interested only in the present and future, what is, and what is to be. Whatever the present is, or the future brings me, I am sure that every joy and blessing will be destroyed with mathematical certainty and precision. Whenever the darkness dwindles to the shadow of a shade, or perchance the sunlight falls athwart my pathway, I know that the dark angels will come again and drag me back to hell. In this world there are too many temptations for the weak; too many snares for the trusting heart of innocence; too many pitfalls for the unwary; too much hardship for the good there is in it; too much canvas for the

size of the show; too much to destroy, and, alas, too many helping hands idle. Evil is organized, effective, and aggressive. Good is timid, disorganized, and circumscribed. The hosts of Satan are abroad in the land, bringing swift destruction with them. The camps of Israel are almost deserted, and are like McClellan's army was on the banks of the Potomac, "All Quiet," and held in check by the captains whose only desire seems to be to save themselves from personal injury. But no matter; the achievements of this world are not worth achieving; its victories are not worth gaining. The trophies of intellectual labor are not worth what they cost. Famous men are martyrs. Every life is a failure because every man, like Solomon, finds in the end that it is nothing but vanity and vexation."

Here he descended from the sublime to the ridiculous by taking another pull from the bottle.

"How like an abiding dream is the face of the world to-night,—the hills over there, the majestic river yonder, with the clouds looming up as if they would deluge the world. With this cursed liquor numbing my brain, and the trees around me sighing the never-ending sigh of the forest, I seem wafted to Utopian bliss. Oh! if I could sink to rest, just now, and pass to that silent shore, while my faculties are numbing and regret for past failures are dead! Euthanasia, let me embrace thee to-night. Let this throbbing pulse be still and this visionary brain forget its cunning. Let me pass to the realms of shade and find rest in the bosom of silence. Let this hour be indeed a deep enchanting prelude to repose! Oh this cursed appetite for drink; the very leaves seem to whisper, whisky, whisky, whisky."

And the poor tramp lapsed into silence, which he maintained until it was time to drink again, after which he continued:

"God knows how I've been worsted in my uneven struggle for existence. I left this country a gentleman. I

return a vagabond ; a rum-soaked tramp, unfit for the society of decent men."

The human frame is so constituted that an expenditure of muscular force demands a proper amount of repair. Bodily fatigue is accelerated by a free use of stimulating fluid nourishment. Therefore, if alcohol has within itself the power to cause fatigue, a long walk of many weary miles added to the beverage, or the beverage added to the walk, as you please, will certainly cause excessive fatigue — a weariness caused by a blending of the natural, with a preternatural and a wee bit of supernatural.

A mistaken idea prevails that tramps are carboniferous deposits, and that they never die. It does look that way, but such are not the facts. It is true, that one tramp — I mean a genuine, orthodox tramp of the old school, not our tramp — resembles all tramps of the old school, for the same reason that one lady dressed in her gossamer storm cloak, with the hood drawn over her head, resembles each one of a world full of ladies dressed in their storm cloaks with the hoods pulled over their heads. I can not imagine how the government could utilize tramps, unless it grants them annuities, and even then, many of them would be too lazy to draw their rations. This government feeds a lot of wild, shiftless and shirtless Indians ; why not tramps ? They could be regulated by the militia, and bayonet regulation, plenty of it, is what the average tramp deserves and should have. But here I am, chattering away like a swallow, unmindful of the fact that I am endeavoring to say something useful.

Worn out by the long and weary journey of the day, and completely hazed by his deep potations, this classical tramp of mine sank into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that he was on a desert island, doomed to die alone, on the barren rocks, with the sound of a dismal, sullen sea, falling continually upon his ears. Suddenly, from the rocks above him, he heard a dreadful growl, and saw a large grizzly bear crawl out of a

cave and look upon him with a hard, cruel cast of countenance. Looking to the right, he saw a mighty elephant, standing on a huge stone; to the left, on another great rock, was a fierce white bull of extraordinary size. The bear growled at the elephant, and the elephant shook his trunk in defiance; the bull bellowed and pawed the stone in mad haste for a battle. In a twinkling the island seemed alive with animal life. Tigers leaped from rock to rock; lions roared and seemed about to tear the earth asunder. A large turtle crawled up towards the elephant, which began to nose around the innocent looking shell in a contemptuous manner. The turtle snapped the extended trunk, and the elephant gave a snort and a terrific struggle commenced. Slowly, but surely, the turtle drew the great beast from the rock, and both commenced rolling over and over, directly towards him, the turtle holding fast to the elephant's trunk. A horrible death was imminent; he tried to cry aloud, but could not. Down upon him they rolled, but touched lightly, in passing over him, and fell into the sea with a great noise. The white bull now made for the bear, and with one butt of his mighty head, killed him; from the carcass of bruin came a drove of rats that swarmed about and nibbled him viciously; but they soon turned to red ants and worms, that crawled continually through his meager clothing. By and by a couple of panthers came riding by on the back of a Texas pony; the pony cavorted exceedingly, but finally kicked them both from his back and killed them. From the hills above him, countless thousands of cinnamon bears and wild cats started for him, with horrible screams and growls, but just before reaching him, were confronted with a large anaconda of great length. The cats and bears immediately fled, howling with rage. The snake crawled towards him, with its evil eyes glittering, and its tail lashing the sand; round and round him it wrapped its slimy folds, and he felt himself slowly and surely being smothered to death, but hearing the noise of wings, turned

his eyes upward and beheld a mighty condor, who swooped down upon them and bore both, the snake and himself, high up in the air, so high that he lost sight of land and sea. The serpent made an effort to wind itself around the condor, and in doing so, loosed its hold, and he fell, like Icarus, into the sea. The bath seemed to revive him, and he struck out for the shore, but was destined not to reach it, for he struck some kind of an animal which immediately fastened itself to him, and he was a prisoner. He knew the beast at sight, having seen it on several occasions in illustrated newspapers; it had four or five hundred arms and heads fastened to a kettle-shaped body. He was in the clutches of the strong arms of a devil-fish, which rolled him constantly into and out of the sea, and did many things that laid Victor Hugo's Octopus in the shade. It occurred to him that he must do something or drown, and being quite thirsty, began the task of swallowing the sea, in order to get to dry land and strand the beast. The water began to sink; land appeared in the distance—the shores of the sea; and he had great hope of completing his task, when the beast, discovering his plans, began to turn himself rapidly in the water as if to thwart his purpose. He awoke, covered with cold perspiration and burning inwardly with thirst, which explained why he dreamed of taking such an immense contract of drinking sea water. A hard storm had been in progress while he had been sleeping, and, although protected by the trees, he was quite damp. The rain was still coming down with steady vehemence, and now and then a rumble of thunder could be heard, but the fierceness of the storm had abated. Burning with thirst, he arose and sought a small spring he had noticed on the hillside only a short distance away. Long and eagerly he quaffed the cooling liquid, and bathed his face and roaring head in it with great satisfaction, after which the somnolent creature resumed his place at the roots of the beech and was soon asleep. And he dreamed again, but the spirit of his dream was alto-

gether different, for he dreamed of the days of youth; of a happy home and kind friends; of a night-eyed maiden with a pleading face, who embraced him and whispered her love in a voice that was like wine.

“I love you,” he cried, stirring uneasily in his sleep, and the maiden leaned her head on his bosom, just as of yore, and said: “I love you, forever and forever, for weal and for woe.” The scene changed, and he stood by a sun-kissed brook, a barefooted boy, who loved the birds and the sunshine, and the flowers, and the broad wheat fields and the low meadows, better than other things. All the bright things that had died out of his life were restored, and he murmured rapturously, ‘The world is very beautiful, and —’”

The somniloquist found himself sitting bolt upright without knowing why he did so, broad awake, peering into the darkness in search of something which had awakened him. There was a tangible nearness of something, and he was conscious of the presence of something alive which might be dangerous to search for in the dark. Were you ever alone in the dark, filled with a sense of fear and expectancy? If so, did you not notice that silence made a noise, in trying to keep still? Long and earnestly the tramp peered into the darkness, in search of something he failed to discover. He was sure that something had caused a break in his slumbers, and, not being able to compose his mind, started towards the river in a very cautious and noiseless manner. When near the bank, where he could plainly hear the noise of the waves and ripples, he saw a light which proved to be from a lantern on board of a small tug boat, about large enough to carry a half dozen passengers. What could it mean? Perhaps the man in the boat could tell him? No doubt he could, but would he do so? The man in the boat might have a gun in his pocket, and if he was a bad man, engaged in some foul deed, would be sure to use the gun in reckless haste if anything to shoot at approached. Therefore, discretion was the

best policy, and the better part of valor. Once, in a western town, this tramp had encountered a man with a gun, and the man with the gun had shot into his anatomy with true western fervor. With some trepidation he gazed at the little craft, and the man dimly outlined by the light of the lantern, and after due consideration, in the light of historical events, he concluded to allow the man the unmolested use of the boat and the freedom of the Ohio river.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TRAMP UTILIZED.

Gliding in amongst the trees again, he sought the spring, for the purpose of obtaining another draught. After refreshing himself and cooling his parched tongue with a prolonged draught, he concluded to seek his former reposing place and leave the nocturnal visitor, or visitors, as the case might be, to carry out their schemes, whether good or evil, unmolested. Self-preservation being the first law of nature, and tramps being built on the labor-saving plan, you should not be surprised at a practical demonstration on the part of *our* tramp. Awhile ago you heard him voting life a bore and a fraud, yet he was just like other people, and shrank from the death he longed to embrace. His head was hot and dizzy, and he bathed it again in the running water of the spring. After which he gazed long and earnestly into the inky blackness of the forest, and something made him start with surprise. It was the flash of a lantern in the low marshy lands beneath him. What could it all mean? Lanterns, men, and boats, floating around at the darkest hour of night. Surely there was a purpose and an aim in such a mystery worth finding out, and when the lantern flashed again the tramp began to edge

his way towards the place from whence it came. After bumping in and out among the trees for some time, he came to a place where he supposed the light would be found, but he searched in vain, and was about to give up in despair, when he saw it again in a dense undergrowth just in front of him. Was he following a will-o'-the-wisp? He persuaded himself to move forward, and as he approached the light heard the sound of a pick, and by and by a shovel. What could it mean? He also discerned the dim outlines of three men. Were they searching for buried treasure? He was not a coward, and being intensely excited, drew very near, screened by the decayed stump of a tree. He was now very near, and, by reaching out his hand, could have touched one of the men — the one who held the lantern. An object lay upon the ground; what was it? As the light flashed upon it the tramp was horrified to notice that it was a human body, apparently dead, with its face and head covered with blood. The man with the light came close to the prostrate form — it was the body of a woman. The man who handled the pick and shovel was digging a grave. Horror of horrors! What could it all mean? A steamer, and men with lanterns burying the body of a woman in an out-of-the-way place at night! Was he dreaming, or was it a fact? There were the men, and the body, and the grave, and the lantern, and the pick, and the shovel; but there was no undertaker, no hearse, no mourners, no preacher, and none of the appurtenances of a first-class, or even respectable funeral. Could it be murder? The thought came like a flash. All the time he had suspected evil, and that the men were criminals, but to bring it down to murder, and to think that he was face to face with murderers, just completing their foul work, was almost too much of a strain on his nervous system. Should he stand idly by and see a crime successfully consummated? His pugilistic qualities were aroused, and the tramp was swallowed up by the soldier within him. He was every inch of a man

now. The men were in an open space, in a dense undergrowth, and our tramp was concealed, but their every action was plain to him. Each one had served his time at the grave, handling the pick and shovel, and it was nearly completed.

“Spinoza, you are a d — n fool,” said the classical gravedigger, from the depths of the tomb; “do you want us to dig to China, or bury this woman so deep that the sound of Gabriel’s trumpet can not reach her?”

“Softly, pard, softly!” said the tall, villainous looking Spinoza. “Doncher know how the speerits tantalize me ef the body haint put in deep?”

“Speerits, the devil!” muttered the man in the grave. “Might as well have drapped her inter the ’Hio River, en been done with it.”

“To be sure,” cried the little ratty looking fellow who held the lantern. “What’s the use of comin’ away down here to hide the stiff, when we could uv dropt it inter the river? There is not no money in this ’eer job noways, not ’nuff to be so tickler ’bout.”

“Yer blamed neck would be in danger jist the same,” growled Spinoza. “’Sperience teach a man a great many things, an’ I know fur a fact, thet water aint ez good as dirt an ashes in sich business. Bury ’em deep, says I, and kiver ’em with logs and brush, which you set on fire and leave to burn. Who’d think uv lookin’ under a pile of ashes in the woods arter a missin’ woman? Nary body would do so, says I.”

“Derned if ye haint right,” said an admiring voice from the tomb. “I’m a learnin’ somethink about the profession every day. Don’t bleeve in speerits, though, Cap, ’ceptin’ of them as comes in bottles.”

Spinoza accepted this as a reminder, and handed the man a flask, from which he drank long and eloquently.

“Likker is a good thing in its place,” said the little wharf-rat, gazing with consternation at the vehement manner in

which the grave-digger downed the fiery liquid. The flask was handed to him, and he proceeded to put the remaining contents where he considered was its "proper place."

"Hurry up!" Spinoza ejaculated, "er the d—n nigger 'll run off with the boat."

"All ready, Cap," said the voice from the tomb. "Three feet deep and room enough to turn round in."

"Kaint we hev some religious doin's?" said the man with the lantern. "Yarth to yarth, and sompin else like that?"

"Bah!" cried Spinoza, contemptuously. "After a man or woman's cold, bury 'em quick, says I. All you say over the carcass is twaddle, pow-wow an' twaddle, twaddle. The speerit uv this eer gal haint in a millyun miles uv this neck uv the woods."

Instantly a very low moan came to the startled ears of the villainous trio. It was from the tramp, but answered the purpose.

"Speerits," shouted the superstitious Spinoza. "I knowed nothing good ed come uv killin' this critter."

"You're a fool," said the burly grave-digger. "There haint no sech thing ez spooks, and ef they ware, they would n't be a wastin uv their time in Kaintuck. I tell you that sound did n't come from ary spook; its from some animile ur reptile. Now, hurry up an help strip the togs off'n this gal, and lets heave her inter the 'ternity box and git."

Spinoza having recovered his legs, began to help the ruffian, and the clothing of the woman had been partially removed, when Spinoza uttered an exclamation of fright, and began to jabber in most abject terror.

"Booby!" said the burly villain, who continued his efforts to disrobe the body; "hev you hern another ghost er goblin?"

"Cap's got too much likker on board; he's as narvous as a moonlight 'stiller, a makin' uv blue-grass bitters without permission," said the man with the lantern.

“Damn yer ugly mugs!” chattered Spinoza; “Kaintcher understand? The critter aint ded.” The burly villain laid his broad hand on the woman’s brow, and, to his surprise, found it life-like. Tearing away the clothing from the chest, he laid his ear to the heart, and, after a time, could detect a low throbbing.

“Fools air sometimes kerrect,” he said, alluding to Spinoza; arising to his feet and stepping away from the body, he continued: “She’s alive and’ll soon be a kickin’.”

“Onless some interweenin providence pervents,” said the clerical lantern man.

“Somethin’ is agoin’ to happen suddingly,” said the burly villain, leveling his revolver at the prostrate form; “ef she haint ded, she will be immejitly. It’s bad policy to do things by ’alves.”

Something did happen. Something, with a cork-leg, came hopping from behind a big stump, and gave the burly scoundrel a blow that would have felled an ox. With a scream of pain he dropped his pistol and fled. The lantern man endeavored to extinguish his lantern, and in doing so dropped it. The entire party went in the general direction of the river. The tramp grasped the revolver, and followed as best he could, but when he arrived on the bank of the river, found they had boarded the craft, and were leaving in hot haste. A shot from the revolver took effect in Spinoza’s right arm, and he roared with pain, much to the enjoyment of the burly ruffian, who laughed outright, and seemed truly glad that some one, besides himself, was hurt.

They steamed slowly out of sight, and as they will not figure further in this story, I will let them go without further notice. I know that it is a part of my duty as a novelist to hang these villians, but I positively cannot spare the time. I did not read in the papers, that these scoundrels arrived safely at any point along the Ohio River; then let us pray, devoutly, that their boat was swamped and their bodies became

food for the fishes. Or, if they did land safely, let us hope that they reformed and became good and useful members of the Salvation Army.

Slowly the tramp wended his way through the trees back to the place where he had left the body. Everything was dark, and in stumbling around he fell into the newly-made grave. He crawled out with an oath, and a sprained wrist, and searched for the lantern, which at length was found. A tramp without matches would not be a tramp, and the lantern was soon burning as brightly as ever. The woman was lying just as he had left her, apparently without life, yet certainly alive. Her garments were badly disarranged, and disclosed a well rounded limb to the knee, from which the silken hose had been pulled down. The tramp carefully adjusted the stocking, and said :

“It is her own personal and private property to expose or conceal at will, but I am not so vile a thing as to allow my eyes to gaze upon what she would conceal if restored to consciousness. Woman is the foundation of constitutional government ; her influence is a lever that can turn the world upside down—and at the bottom of every man’s calamity, is either a woman’s leg, or a bottle of whisky, or both.”

And this philosophical tramp composed her wearing apparel as decently and gently as a woman would have done, after which he folded his coat and placed it under her head, and, bringing some water from the spring in his hat, bathed her face and temples for a long time. He was rewarded, at length, by the sound of a sigh from the woman ; after much more rubbing and deluging with spring water, there were more sighs and moans from the wounded. By and by the pulse was throbbing and the blood circulating. What was he to do ? A stranger in a strange land, at night, in company with a dead woman who insisted in returning to life, contrary to precedent. It so happened that this locality was not thickly settled, on account of the sterility of the soil, and, conse-

quently, the nearest house was at least two miles distant. Help he must have, but how to obtain it was hard to determine. The only way possible was to hunt up some one and solicit aid. To leave his charge alone, exposed and helpless as she was, did not seem proper, but it must be done. He remembered to have seen an old log cabin, with signs of life about it, yesterday—the signs of life being a pig rooting in the sod. “Where there’s a pig, there’s a man, and where there’s a man, there’s generally a woman, and, perhaps, warm hearts and willing hands.” So he reasoned, as he started on his quest, carrying the lantern with him, in order to make a quick trip. As he proceeded his anxiety increased, and it seemed hours to him before he stood at the door of the cabin. After a prolonged pounding there was evidence of animation within, and lamp light was visible. A gruff voice cried out:

“Who be it, and what dew ye want?”

“I am a stranger, and wish you no harm; to cut a long story short, there’s a woman laying at the point of death, in the wood, about two miles from your cabin, and she needs medical aid and immediate attention. Will you not go with me and assist in bringing her to your house? You shall be amply rewarded for your trouble.”

“Dew be keerful, Zebadee,” said a female voice. “It may be a scheme to git you from the house, and then rob us, an’ you know that costly chaney sugar bowl that grandmother gave us, aint to be picked up every day in the week; no, not by a jug full.”

“Pap,” squeaked a voice from some uncertain depth, “tell thet feller to go ’long away. I s’pect he’s only one uv a gang that’s stealin’ uv horses, an wants tew git us out inter the woods and then steal old Charley.”

“Shet,” said Zebadee, “horse thieves don’t go round the country with railroad lanterns in ther hands.”

“Good people,” said the tramp, in despairing tones, “I

beg you to trust me. Remember, that the woman's life is in great danger, and every moment is valuable. If you will not assist me, have you a cart or small hand wagon of some kind that I could use in conveying her to some place where she will be cared for properly?"

"Blame my skin ef any one shall ever say that Zeb Conway turned a man or woman from his door when they were a sufferin'. Git up hayr, Borygard, and git yerself riddy fur tew help."

The door was thrown open, and the tramp beheld the interior of an humble dwelling place, very plainly and cheaply furnished with ancient designs of furniture, but, also, neat and clean. The family consisted of a man, woman, and a boy in his teens. They were soon ready to accompany the stranger, and the male trio started off together, carrying with them a very light, old-fashioned rocking chair, which seemed the most available vehicle in which to carry the woman to the house.

They had proceeded but a short distance when Zeb was called back to the house by his good and cautious housewife.

"Zeb," she said, "dew be keerful; that feller may be a bad un fer all ye know. I smelt whisky on him, an' mebbly he's jist aimin' to git ye into trouble. Take my shears along with ye, an ef he makes a pass at ye, jist stick him the same as ye would a pig."

Zeb did not accept his wife's proffered pair of scissors, but turning away in disgust, hastened to rejoin the tramp and his son. With much difficulty the tramp conducted them to the place where the woman was lying, telling his story as he went. They heard her moaning, piteously, before reaching the spot, but she way lying in about the same position in which the tramp had left her. Instantly Zebadee's good, kind heart warmed towards the unfortunate female, and he was affected to tears when he saw the grave, and comprehended the truth of the tramp's strange story.

Very tenderly she was lifted in their strong arms, placed in the rocking chair, and made as comfortable as possible for the hard journey to the cabin. The men were strong and able to carry their burden, but it was a harder task than they anticipated, and the tramp's sprained wrist was quite painful. The boy went before them with the lantern, and found a much shorter route to the house than the one taken by the tramp. The poor, wounded girl was finally laid upon a soft, white bed, in the cabin, in an unconscious condition.

The tramp, or Juan Valera, as he called himself, after receiving minute instructions from Zebadee, mounted old Charley, and started for the small village of Exter in search of medical aid, while Beauregard went to a distant neighbor's to inform them of the affair.

"Zeb Conway," said the good wife, shedding tears, "kin ye see the hand uv the Lord in this 'ere bizness? Pears like as if God warn't a doing his hull duty when he stood by an' 'lowed a passel o' devils to butcher up this pore lamb this away."

"Jezreel, don't ye be complainin' uv the Almighty. He do everything fer the best, even in old Kaintuck. Jedge him not, nur try to argify about his intentions, which air allus good; fer the Lord made the heavings an' the airth, an' every livin' critter, an' he don't need no advise about heow to run his business. Ax no questions when he do anythink, fur the book says, 'He is good an' his marcy indureth fur ever.' Look how he pestered Job, Jezreel; how he killed his cattle, destroyed his craps, took his children away from him, and kivered him all over with gumbiles an' swellin's uv all kinds, an' sent the devil to make him swear; but Job jist kept right on a grinnin' and a barrin' uv it, an' never said a harmful word agin the Lord, an' by an' by he found out thet the Lord knew a blamed sight the most."

"Zebadee," replied the good woman, who had been unceasing in her efforts to relieve the unfortunate woman,

and was at that moment bathing her hands and feet, "I never could hold a cannell to ye in argifyin' scriptur', but how could the Lord permit sich doin's right under our very noses? How could we'uns be a sleepin' an' a snorin' away in our beds when them raskils war a tryin' to bury a live woman under the ground up thar in the swamp? An' sich a nice gal, tew. Jist look 'a hyar—" And the motherly Jezreel held up one of the tiny hands of the wounded female. It was bleeding, having been tramped upon and mangled in a most cruel manner by the would-be assassins.

"Bory's hed time tew git back," said Zebadee, after having examined the wounded hand. "Them Hargitt gals haint much account, but they'll be company fer ye, leasta-ways."

"Borygard hed better staid tew hum," said Jezreel, "them Hargitt gals kaint take keer uv a sick woman no more than nothin'. Becky Hargitt haint got no more sence than our brown heifer, no how, an' the hull lot uv 'em are a slomicky set."

Beauregard suddenly made his appearance, much excited, and with a look of deep disgust on his countenance.

"Pap," he exclaimed, "dern their ugly picters, not a one uv 'em would come. Skeered to death when I tole 'em 'bout the gal. Kurnel Hargitt, he says: 'Bub, tell Kurnel Conway that mebbly I'll run down tew Kurnel Davis' an Kurnel O'Brien's after breakfast and tell 'em tew go over tew yore house, though taint our bizness, nohow, tew fule with strange weemin who git killed a purpose to be taken keer uv by law-abidin', tax-payin' citizens.'"

"Do n't want the slomicky set around here noways," said Jezreel. "Glad they haint a comin'."

Colonel Hargitt did not come, nor did he inform his distant neighbors, for he was a conservative kind of an old foggy, who believed in having as little intercourse with the world as possible. Therefore, the news of the sad affair was not

spread to any extent until long after the departure of the unfortunate woman.

"Guess the pore critter must be a furriner," continued Jezreel, after Beauregard had told his story, "fur I heerd her talkin' Dutch or sompin' like, awhile ago."

"*Au bout du compte mon ami, Tant va la cruche a l'eau qu'a la fin elle secasse,*" came from the suffering girl in soft flowing accents.

"Thar, Borygard, aint that Dutch? You'uns have bin tew skule!" said Jezreel.

"*Dixi et Salvavi animam meam,*" continued the feverish sufferer.

"Dutch, did yer say, mam?" said Beauregard, with an air of great superiority. "Them's Irish."

"Dutch ur Irish, ur what not, she's a pore unfortunite critter, thet cum tew us by the marcy uv God, an' jist ez long ez thar's a crust uv bread in the cabin she shill hev it," said Zebadee Conway, earnestly and firmly.

"*On connait l'ami au besoin,*" as if in reply.

"Soun's like she's a swarin' 'bout sumthink," said Bory, "but mebbey it's the way the Irish jabber when they git hurt."

"Hesh, Bory; the pore critter don't know what she's a sayin' no more than nothin'. Her brains are all momixed up, an' it's enough to make anybody swar jest tew look at her," said Jezreel.

Meanwhile, Valera, the tramp, had arrived at the village of Exter, which is so small that you could not find it on your map, and proceeded to search for the village physician, which was not an easy matter for a stranger at such an early hour of the morning.

An old, rickety, two-story frame house, with a long porch on the street side of it, was called a hotel, from the bar-room of which came a feeble light from a dingy lamp on the counter used as a bar. The tramp was not a trifle backward about arousing the landlord of the house, which he

did by long and continued rapping at the door. The landlord, who had retired with an overdose of Tom and Jerry, was not at all willing to admit any one, or, rather, not willing to get out of bed, although day was breaking. A shrill female voice followed the opening of a window, and he was commanded to leave. The tramp knocked longer and louder than before, and finally a half-dressed individual grumblingly admitted him, saying that he did not "like to get out of bed jest to git a man a drink." Much to his surprise Valera told him he did not want a drink, but a physician and surgeon immediately, for one who was at the point of death. The landlord, who was a good natured individual and sympathetic, went with him to the dwelling of the only physician in the place. To the tramp's chagrin and horror, he was told by the lady of the house that the doctor was in the city, and would not return for several days.

"She will die for want of medical aid," groaned the tramp. "What shall I do? She will surely die unless I get a physician."

"And," said his companion, by way of consolation, "there is not another doctor within ten miles of the place."

"Then it is indeed useless to hope for assistance, for she would be dead before the journey could be made."

"I have it!" cried the landlord. "A doctor from New Orleans has been at the hotel for several days; he is here looking after some land interests, and will return to-day. It might be that you could prevail upon him to favor you with his services. His purpose is to get a steamer at the landing just beyond Conway's, and would possibly stay with you the greater part of the day."

"If he will serve me," said Valera, "then I shall no longer doubt the intervention of a kindly Providence in human affairs. Let us ascertain at once if he will come to the rescue."

Dr. Gabriel Lemoine was sleeping the sleep of the just,

and was awakened from a "deep dream of peace" rather rudely by the landlord, who was becoming much excited with the idea that he was about to be of some use in the world.

Lemoine was an eminent physician, and like all eminent physicians should be, who have climbed the rugged path to fame, and touched and rested on every round of the ladder, he was not greatly surprised nor seriously annoyed at being summoned from his bed. Valera was ushered into the private apartment occupied by the physician, and told his story with exceeding briefness. His style of address was courteous in the extreme, and the doctor mentally pronounced him a gentleman; not knowing anything to the contrary. Fortunately Lemoine had a complete outfit of improved surgical instruments, and his medicine case. The latter he carried with him from force of habit, and the former had been purchased, in the city, since leaving home. He consented readily to accompany the tramp; the landlord rushed off in hot haste, and had a horse and buggy at the door within a few moments. The drive to Conway's was forced and rapid, but a little after sunrise they arrived within half a mile of the cabin, where the doctor was forced to abandon the vehicle on account of the roughness of the road, or rather on account of the absence of the road. The landlord returned to Exter, as Lemoine had brought his meager luggage with him, purposing not to return to the village if he could succeed in getting any kind of a river vehicle to —, where he would take passage to Cairo.

When they arrived they found the girl quite delirious, and talking French and Latin constantly, which the physician seemed to understand. He told them that the girl was certainly a fine scholar, and surmised that she was a school teacher in some city school. It seemed apparent that she was a foreigner, and as her French was so perfect, they decided that she was a French woman, of gentle blood. Valera had styled her *Le petite Aimee*, and continued to do so when he had occasion to speak of her.

CHAPTER XVII.

LE PETITE AIMEE.

Dr. Gilbert Lemoine was in love with his profession, and a difficult piece of surgery was a thing of joy to him. Not that he cared to witness suffering, or cause pain, but he was skillful, had a reputation to sustain, and was as proud of a neat job of surgery as a good carpenter is proud of the excellence of his work. His practice, at home, was extensive — too extensive for his good, and being overworked, he concluded to visit his former home in Kentucky, where he was interested largely in real estate, which he had not seen for ten or twelve years. He had left the State of Kentucky when a boy; had lived most of a long lifetime in the State of Louisiana, and nearly all of the time at New Orleans. It was a very fortunate thing for *Le petite Aimee* that, in her distress, so good a physician and surgeon was at hand. He examined his patient thoroughly, evincing much interest in the case, for he readily discerned that a delicate surgical operation was necessary, and had very grave doubts as to the results. The sick woman was quite handsome, and her soft flowing French accents, moaning and wild at times, had a peculiar charm for the grim doctor, and caused his heart to soften in sympathy for the brave little woman who had doubtless suffered some great wrong at the hands of villains who might never be brought to justice. Within the humble cabin of the poor Cracker, this great physician was as zealously devoted to his beloved profession as he would have been at the bedside of a millionaire's daughter. He was the kind of a surgeon who would saw a king's leg off, or a beggar's leg off, with the same degree of finish; in either case the job would be executed in the best and most skillful manner known to the profession, with no other incentive than professional pride and

love for duty. He had a holy contempt for the cobblers of his profession, and despised all professional brethren who had acquired loose ways of executing their professional duties. It was said of him, that he could carve a man all to pieces in the dark, a thing easy to do, I admit, but his admirers only meant that he could perform his work to perfection. The case before him was an elegant one, and he mentally congratulated himself upon being so fortunate.

Zebadee Conway was a poor, unambitious creature, but his heart was as warm as the summer's sunshine. He had always lived in Kentucky, and had a half developed idea that it was a little nearer heaven than the balance of the world. Unlettered and uncouth, yet he was, indeed, a true specimen of an honest man, so far as his intentions were concerned, and a fitting companion for the motherly Jezreel. The soft-hearted Beauregard began to sniffle as soon as he caught sight of the surgeon's gleaming steel, and when the poor girl screamed with pain, he blubbered out in tearful sympathy, and was ordered peremptorily from the room. He fled to the log stable, where he wrapped his arms around "old Charley's" neck, and vowed that it was a "derved shame fer the pesky sawbones to hurt the little Irish gal thet away."

Old Charley, who was, doubtless, angry because of the hard usage given him by the tramp, twisted his tail and snorted in a way that plainly intimated that he was glad that some one was to suffer a dispensation of Providential wrath, as redress for his wrongs. Jezreel came to the stable, also, to have a cry, after she could be of no further use at the house.

"Bory! Bory! may the Lord presarve us," she cried. "It's a 'nuff to drive a body wild to see that feller pokin' of his little iron crowbars inter the pore critter, and a lookin' ez onconsarned ez if he war jist a skinnin' uv a catfish; it makes my blood bile; it do, Bory, it do, and I kaint hep it." She sobbed violently for a few moments, and then, as if by inspir-

ation, said: "May the good Lord find them devils that tried to murder the poor gal against her will."

"An' send 'em to hell whar they belong," added Beauregard, with pious emphasis.

Jezreel shuddered and sobbed, but said nothing, doubtless regarding her son's profanity excusable under the circumstances. After awhile she gathered some fresh eggs, and hastened to the cabin and finished preparations for the morning meal, which had been somewhat neglected. It was quite late, however, before any one would think of eating, for the patient had been troublesome, and the doctor's task quite difficult; but, after everything had been adjusted to a nicety, he was ready to appease his appetite. He thought he had never tasted food with a better relish than on that occasion. The good housewife had spared no pains to make the meal a success, and the results were gratifying to her guests.

After breakfast a stroll in the woods was in order, and Valera, in company with the physician, went out to enjoy a smoke, and to devise some plan whereby the patient could be cared for properly.

"Under the circumstances, I am deeply interested in her welfare," said Valera.

"I am equally interested in her," said Lemoine, "for I know that it is absolutely necessary that she receive the closest attention by a skilled physician, and, if possible, by an experienced nurse, otherwise she will die. If she regains health, there is great danger that her mental faculties will be permanently injured. It is quite probable that, even with the best attention, she will require the confinement and restraint of a mad house during the remainder of her life."

Valera was astounded and greatly troubled by this bit of information, given so quietly and with such professional candor.

"Great God! have I saved her from death that she may live and die in a mad house? It would have been far better if the villains had consummated their foul designs."

“It happens that way sometimes,” said Lemoine. “But people will get hurt, otherwise surgical skill would be of little benefit to mankind. If the girl lives at all, it will be a wonderful triumph of a strong constitution over death itself. She is endowed with great vitality and a healthy body, which is the only hope. There is one chance in a thousand that she may be restored to reason, if restored to health, but only a very small chance in a thousand chances, and if she remain here that chance will be in danger. What shall we do? Place her in charge of some charitable institution, and run the risk of having her properly nursed?”

“There is no available institution of that kind hereabouts; if there was I should prefer to *know* that she had proper care, and would not leave her in incompetent hands, or with those who would fail to give her that sympathetic attention so necessary to a speedy restoration to good health.”

“I admire your judgment; good nursing and pleasant surroundings are sometimes the best medicine; but what is done must be done quickly. It is barely possible she could be removed now, but within a short time her fever will increase and removal would be impossible.”

“Not being familiar with this part of the country,” said Valera, “I am at a loss to know the nearest suitable place for her. If nothing better can be done, I will go to the city and secure the services of a first-class nurse and a good physician, leave the former in charge, and have the latter to make regular visits.”

“All of which would be very costly,” dryly remarked Lemoine. “The people at the cabin have enough good intentions and genuine sympathy to run a hospital, and would do very well for nurses; but it would be impossible to get a first-class physician to visit this God-forsaken region without paying him immense sums of money. Your best plan would be to take her to a place where you can obtain what you need without so much trouble and expense.”

“But how and where can we take her?” said Valera, in tones of despair.

“On that point,” said the physician, “I am unable to give you the slightest assistance. I am a stranger here, and much as I would like to give you further aid, am sorry to say that I must leave this afternoon, for I have many patients at home who are, no doubt, anxiously awaiting my return.”

The two men had wandered more than a mile away from the cabin and were deep in the wood, standing under the over-hanging branches of a great beech. The simple announcement that he would soon be left alone with the helpless girl, made Valera almost sick at heart. He was fully aware of the great responsibility which had been thrust upon him, and the meager opportunities for doing his whole duty. All his manhood had, seemingly, been restored, and with it came regret for the past, and desire for the future. He had been raised from a herbaceous bit of animation at the roots of a tree, to life and action. The fungus growth had ceased, and the fungoid would fain become a healthy and useful plant in the garden of his God. He was determined not to leave the unfortunate girl until he had found her natural protectors, and, if she had none, to remain with her as long as she required his friendship. So he began to devise a plan for the consummation of his wishes, but, as the poet aptly remarked, “The best laid plans of mice and men, gang aft alee,” and I have noticed that, when Providence mixes in with human affairs, and undertakes to assist a man or woman to surmount difficulties, he is generally successful. Reviewing the circumstances, even now, I can see the hand of Providence in the whole matter, else, why should a drunken tramp printer stumble into the wood, in an out-of-the-way locality, almost desolate and quite unattractive, just at the proper time to rescue a beautiful girl from a horrible death? Providence having identified himself in the matter, was bound to lend a helping hand and bridge all difficulties, until

such a time when human hearts and human brains were able to manage the case successfully. And so it happened that Providence came walking through the wood to where they stood, all unconscious of their presence. He came in the shape of a large, well developed Catholic priest, a jolly good fellow, with a smooth face and regulation paunch. He was not exactly of "heaven directed mein," albeit, he was "of cultured soul and sapient eye serene." In fact, he looked as if he enjoyed the good things of *this* world far better than he did the anticipated joys of the next world. Now, will you please inform me how it came about, that an elegantly attired Catholic priest appeared at that opportune moment to help them with his counsel? You must admit that it was Providence who directed him to walk through the wood. To be sure, at the landing, a short ways down the river, was the splendid steamer, "Jasamine Bell," which had pulled in to shore because of the absolute necessity of repairing a break in the machinery. Who broke the machinery? I answer that it was undoubtedly the work of Providence. Not that Providence makes a business of breaking, or disarranging the machinery of steamers, but because it was necessary to send help to the job he had commenced, over on the land. Perhaps the breakage, or disarrangement of the machinery, could have been adjusted without pulling to shore, but the captain conceived the idea of using a green piece of timber in making repairs. Who put that idea into the captain's head, at that time? You know very well who did it. Fine vessels like the "Jasamine Bell" seldom, or never, stopped at this place, as it was only used as a landing for small boats with small purposes.

Now, I have demonstrated that the tramp, the doctor, and the steamer, were providential, and it was also necessary for providential purposes, that the fat priest should waddle out through the wood to where Valera and Lemoine were, more than a mile distant. Do you have any doubts about

this theory of mine? If you have, just consider how reasonable it is, in the light of facts. "Gintlemin," said surprised Father O'Rourke, "right glad am I to meet you. Indade I did not expect to meet anyone in these dreary woods." And the good priest shook hands with the sinners very cordially and vigorously.

"Neither of us belong here, good father," said Lemoine, when each had introduced himself to the other. "We do not belong here, and are anxious to leave; but my friend is compelled to remain, and make some elaborate preparations for the care of a sick girl, who is in his keeping, and is at the point of death."

After this came a recital of *Le petite Aimee's* misfortunes, which greatly interested the holy father, and when he fully comprehended the brutality of the girl's would-be assassins, clenched his fist and became as angry as a sinner would have been.

"Holy Virgin! Mother of God!" he cried, wrathfully. "May their black souls be forever shut away from the light of the Lord and the holy angels."

"Amen!" said Valera, but Lemoine said nothing. I think he was about half way reconciled to the horrors of the case, because of the elegant job of surgery it furnished.

"By your lave, gintlemin, may I not see the one who has been so foully dealt with? Perhaps I may be of service to you."

Without delay the strange trio started for the cabin. Conway met them at the door, and, after being presented to the new guest, said to Lemoine: "Glad to hev ye back, fer the little un 's bin goin' on awful sence ye left."

Lemoine administered an op^{er}_{er}, and the restless girl became quiet.

The big-hearted priest was astonished that such a frail looking creature could be so badly wounded, and so brutally treated, and yet be alive. With Lemoine and the tramp, he

was convinced that she should be removed, at once, to a place where she would receive the best medical aid. But where to, and how?

Beauregard entered the room and edged his way around in front of Father O'Rourke. He had learned that the new addition was a divine, and he appeared before the group with eyes red with much weeping. His face was illumined with an original idea.

"Be ye a preacher?" he said, addressing the good father.

"Yis, my boy, I am a preacher, or priest of the Holy Catholic Church. What can I do for you?"

"If yer a preacher, why in the thunder do n't yer drop down on yer knees an' ask the Lord to mend up the little gal and make her as sound as a dollar?"

Had a bombshell exploded under his chair, the good father would not have arisen with more alacrity, nor with a redder face, and he did pray, with becoming grace.

"Bory!" said Zebadee's threatening voice.

Beauregard trembled, and said softly to himself, "Pap's agoin' tew wollop me for sassin' the preacher."

His father pointed his finger towards the doorway, with so much expression that the boy was satisfied a thrashing was in store for him. But the priest was not offended, and softly said, with great humility:

"My good friend, do the boy no harm, for he taught me a good lesson, and urged me to my duty. He was right in doing so, and, more than that, he has turned my thoughts into the right channel. On board the steamer, at the landing, are two sweet-tempered Sisters of Mercy, of the Hospital of the Good Samaritan, of Saint Louis, Mo. With me, they have been up the Ohio River on business connected with that institution. I am sure they^d would take charge of the young girl if she could be removed to the hospital, where the best medical skill, and everything necessary to her comfort, would be provided. What do you say, gintlemin?"

"Just the thing," said Lemoine; "your plan is a good one."

"If we can manage to get her to the steamer safely," added Valera.

"There is on board the steamer a first-class stretcher, suitable for conveying the girl, and I think it could be done without much jolting. Four stout men, with four to relieve them, could make the trip in a short time. Shall we proceed?"

"At once," said Lemoine, rising.

Jezreel interposed, and insisted that all should partake of the repast which she had prepared. Of course the priest was hungry, for the dinner hour had passed some time before. It was sumptuous in all respects, and the good father showed himself an expert in gracefully stowing away the many excellent things set before him, and, at the same time, passing many a well-timed remark of approval and praise, much to the delight of the dazzled Jezreel, who had never seen such great men before. She had always believed that great people are separated from ordinary people by a wall so high that the common people never get a glimpse of them. So they are sometimes, but dinner, like death, brings all men to a common level. If there is any time in the world when a great man is willing to lay aside prejudice and acknowledge the common brotherhood of the race, it is just after a bounteous repast, where all the dishes have been just to suit his palate. Whether the dinner made the priest better able to perform his duties, or not, is a matter of no consequence, but certain it is that he entertained the group immediately afterwards with a glowing account of the tender mercies and excellent management of the "Hospital of the Good Samaritan." Finally it was agreed that Valera and the father should go at once to the landing to make the necessary arrangements with the captain of the steamer, procure a stretcher, and bring back a sufficient number of men to make

the trip expeditiously. Dr. Lemoine was to remain and prepare his patient for removal. No sooner were these conclusions reached than executed. The captain was not especially delighted with the idea of admitting other passengers until a considerable sum of money was guaranteed him, after which he was all smiles and condescension. The "Sisters of Mercy," Catherine and Serepta, ever on the alert in deeds of charity, were immediately interested in the case, and insisted on returning through the woods with Valera to the cabin where the sick girl lay. But the priest forbid them doing so, and they busied themselves in making all possible kinds of arrangements for the accommodation and comfort of the patient. A number of stout men volunteered their services, and more than the number required followed Valera, all anxious to lend aid. The sun had gone down and the cooling breezes of evening were flowing when the little procession came in sight of the steamer on the return trip. On a stretcher, mute and motionless, and under the influence of an opiate, the slight figure of *Le petite Aimee* was resting. Those strong men bore her tenderly, and with scarcely a jostle, all the way through the wood, and placed her under the protecting care of the gentle Sisters of Mercy, with little or no additional injuries. The Conways were the unwilling recipients of a handsome sum of money from Valera and Lemoine, who parted from them with many promises to return and renew the acquaintance begun under such singular circumstances. Down *Le Belle Riviere* went the magnificent steamer to Cairo, without stopping at any point along the line, and here they parted company with Dr. Lemoine. This worthy gentleman volunteered to notify all the western city papers, and the police of some of the larger towns and cities, giving them a history of the case of *Le petite Aimee*, so far as known to them, hoping thereby to give information to her friends in regard to her whereabouts; but, alas, the absent-

mindful physician, in the hurry and bustle of the hour, forgot all about his contract.

From Cairo, up the Mississippi to St. Louis, Mo., the steamer went with alacrity, and the wounded girl was placed, one morning, in a cool, clean bed, mute and helpless, yet alive. Oh, how tenderly those sweet-faced Sisters of Mercy cared for her, and what a vast difference there is between the care of experienced nurses and the care of inexperienced and incompetent nurses.

Now, if you will pardon me, I will leave the damsel for a time, feeling satisfied that she will receive constant and tender attention during our absence.

I have told you that Valera was a first-class printer, and could hold cases in the best offices in the country, and when at work never failed to earn good wages. He had been idle only a short time, and consequently had some money, but his new relations demanded reform on his part, and he resolved, for the sake of *Le petite Aimee*, to lead a different life, for he would need his money now, at least for a time. He sought the office of the daily *Republican* in search of employment, and was cordially received by the foreman. Perchance you are unaware that a printer is never an entire stranger in any printing office. The moment he enters a composing room, he is known to every compositor, that is, they know that he is a printer, although it be their first meeting. Another thing is always reasonably certain, which is, that the new comer is financially embarrassed. Most journeymen printers have made typoreal tours, and are aware of the devastating and depleting results of such tours. Therefore, when our tramp entered the composing room, Slug number four said to Slug number five:

“There’s one of the boys, Johnny, and he’s in hard luck!”

“And, of course, he’ll ‘pan-handle’ the office,” said Slug five, feeling for a quarter. Much to their surprise, the

tramp did not ask for money, but expressed regret at not being able to obtain cases, when the foreman told him the best they could do for him was to give him a chance to "sub" awhile. And the tramp did "sub," in a most satisfactory manner, and in many ways showed himself master of the art. He became a favorite with the numerous attachés of the office, and, one night a printer wishing to lay off, requested Valera to take his cases for a few days. When the first regular night's work was ended the foreman discovered that Juan Valera could "stick" more solid minion and brevier than any man in the office. The story of his new responsibilities was known, and he had the sympathies of his fellows. Therefore, in the light of facts, there could be but one result, he was regularly employed, at good wages. In a short while we find him elegantly attired, with no traces of debauchery or dissipation upon his handsome face, as polished as Chesterfield, and a most companionable fellow. His work of reformation was seemingly and surprisingly complete. From the vagabondish life of a tramp printer he had emerged to a higher life, and was, apparently, better adapted to play the role of gentleman than to drift aimlessly about without a purpose or an aim. Nature had evidently intended him to play an important part in the Drama of Life, but he had failed to live up to his opportunities. Could a man, at his age, make up for lost time and redeem the many wasted hours of his existence? This was a question that troubled him not a little.

Nothing will brace up good resolutions as securely and safely as a sense of responsibility. When the first baby comes into a new family, *pater familias*, perchance wild and reckless before, will sober down to business immediately, and begin in good earnest to work out the designs of a Creator. A wayward young man, suddenly elevated to a position of trust, if he is made of the right material, awakes to a sense of responsibility and develops the latent goodness of his character. A young woman called upon to assume the duties

of maternity, lays aside forever the frivolous ways of girlhood, and, with steady hand and true purpose, follows where duty leads, provided she is put together on the correct plan. Valera felt the pressure of responsibility in his work of reformation, and it buoyed him and made him strong; otherwise I am afraid his efforts in that direction would not have been colossally successful. His honor was now at stake, and he would not fail. There was something to live for now, some incentive to become useful, something to do for soul pay—brain work and heart work, to be paid for in precious coin from the mint of his better self. His empty life had been suddenly filled with a radiance to which he had been a stranger, and a sweet longing to be the possessor of a strong, symmetrical character came to him. In time he seemed apparently oblivious to his past life; evil habits were abandoned, dark passions subdued, and in the luxury of doing good, he entered a new life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HE WAS A MAN OF NERVE.

Several months passed away, and *Le petite Aimee* was still confined to the hospital, with little or no hope of regaining her mental strength. In time her external injuries were healed, but it was conceded that the beautiful, soft-eyed girl was hopelessly insane. All day long she would sit gazing stupidly out the window of her cozy little room, sometimes muttering incoherently, occasionally speaking coherently, in her liquid accents, but all the time no gleam of intelligence could be discerned in her eyes. She was, at all times, dull, staring, idiotic. Once Juan Valera thought he detected a gleam of intelligence on her countenance as he entered her

room in company with one of the hospital saints. She raised her eyes and said, in soft, mournful Italian accents: “*Oh, Signore, la vita, e troppo lunga ; sono molto stanca ta.*”

Whether she was talking to him or not, he vainly hoped that her words were an evidence of returning reason, for, although she occasionally talked, it was not often with such a degree of coherency. Sometimes she seemed talking to herself, mumbling, chattering, and wandering away down through the deep tangles of a disordered brain. Poor, sweet, lost *Aimee*! fate had, indeed, dealt harshly with her.

One day Juan Valera was surprised to find her in a state bordering on frenzy, gnashing her teeth, pulling her hair, and screaming violently. He attempted to soothe her, but, springing upon him, she struck him a violent blow on the head with a billet of wood, which she had, until that moment, concealed in the folds of her dress. Again and again the blow was repeated, and I think if the sisterhood of the institution had not come to his assistance, he would have fared badly. A noisy and fierce conflict ensued.

“Glorious Saint Michael, prince of celestial hosts, what means this?” cried good Sister Serepta, excitedly, as she entered the room.

“Blessed mother of God, help us!” cried angelic Sister Rosamond, as she battled with the crazy girl.

“Saint Catherine, bride of Christ! Come just now,” exclaimed Sister Frances, as the demented creature struck her in the pit of the stomach with the billet of wood.

“Sweet heart of Jesus and Mary, be my refuge,” said Sister Saint Gertrude, repeating the language of a prayer instinctively. “Mercy, oh Jesus! Holy Virgin, protect thy daughters.”

“Oh may the holy angels and the shining hosts of heaven be round about her,” said the wonderfully soft-tongued Sister Catherine, devoutly crossing herself, after *Aimee* had been secured and a watch placed at her side to prevent further

harm. "The mercies of the Lord are in the hands of Mary, in her bosom is a shelter for the weak and weary, and from her comes mercy, and peace, and eternal life. She is the hope of all that lives and the resurrection of the dead. Blessed Peter, keeper of the key of the gate of heaven, forgive our sins and bring us to God. Give us strength to protect and keep this poor girl from danger. Subdue her spirit and illumine her darkened understanding with the light of heaven. Train our hearts in the way of virtue, and save us in heaven."

Juan Valera was painfully hurt and bled profusely, but a free use of cold water brought him around all right. Her first, unexpected blow was upon his temple, and was so fierce that it rendered him, for a time, incapable of self-preservation. Ever afterward he carried a deep scar on his head, of which he was quite proud. The good sisters were exceedingly nervous after this outbreak, when in the presence of *Le petite Aimee*, and wanted to confine her to a cell should another attack come upon her, a proposition which was not received with favor by Juan Valera, whose blood ran cold with horror when he thought of beholding the beautiful creature in such abject confinement. He prevailed upon the Sisters to keep closer watch upon her movements, and it was agreed that she should never be left alone. Saints Catherine and Serepta were employed to give her close attention, and he paid them handsomely for their services and for their motherly care. The soul of Father O'Rourke was greatly troubled when he heard of the violent outbreak, and he predicted that she would become more violent as time passed away. After much conference and counsel it was decided that she be placed in a private asylum, which was properly equipped for handling the incurably insane, kept by a well-known physician who had retired from the active duties of his profession, and was giving his undivided attention to brain diseases; namely, M. Guzoit, a wealthy Frenchman,

who was greatly beloved for his amiable qualities and highly respected for his skill as a physician. His place was one of the loveliest of the kind in the country, and everything that wealth could do had been done to adorn and beautify the house and its surroundings. The rooms were elegantly furnished throughout, and ample arrangements had been made for controlling vicious patients, but the horrible necessities of the place were as much concealed as possible. Father O'Rourke had, on various occasions, had ample opportunities to investigate the merits of this asylum, and had found it to be as near his ideal mad-house as a man could erect.

Juan Valera was convinced that such a place would afford vastly superior advantages, and, in company with Father O'Rourke, called at the place. The matron of the establishment, M. Guzoit's wife, was glad to receive visitors in her best parlors, and was a good friend to the holy father, who had placed several patients under their charge. M. Guzoit greeted his visitors in a cordial manner. Only a few patients were now in the building, and they were from families of wealthy people, kept there by persons who were able to pay for the somewhat expensive privileges and accommodations. Valera was highly pleased with the place; found the patients exceedingly docile, apparently satisfied with their surroundings, and the exceeding urbanity of M. Guzoit and wife won his admiration. Concluding that they were the right kind of people in the right place, he accepted their terms, and made arrangements for *Aimee's* removal. Now, the Sisters of Mercy were sorely grieved to learn that they were to lose their beloved patient, for whom they had labored so long and patiently, and whom they loved so dearly; but they found consolation in the knowledge that she would be in competent hands, that a herculean effort would be made to restore her to reason, and that her new home afforded all the facilities for bringing about the desired result. It was agreed that the transfer of their precious *Aimee* should be made at night,

when the city would be quiet, and all the conditions most favorable. On the evening of *Aimee's* departure, the sisters each bade her an affectionate farewell, kissing her tenderly and speaking soft, soothing words to her, which she could neither understand nor appreciate.

“When the afflicted come to us,” said Sister Serepta, “the soul of the blessed Virgin is pleading with us for mercy. If we give them soft words and gentle care, the peace of God is with us. Angels be with thee, my daughter!” And she kissed her passionately; again and again, weeping bitterly the while. “Saints and angels be with thee,” said dove-eyed Sister Aurelia, as she touched the white forehead with her lips.

“Gracious mother of God, to thee we commit this dear one. Host of Heaven be with her,” said prayerful Saint Catherine.

“May her soul dwell forever in the shadow of the Holy Virgin,” said Sister Rosamond, softly stroking *Aimee's* silken tresses.

“Son of Mary, immaculate Christ, abide with this ewe lamb, who has left her earthly fold and cannot return,” said Sister Frances.

“Adorable Son of the Mother of us all, let the darkened chambers of her soul be filled with that blessed light that illumines the souls of the just, keeps the way of the pure in heart, and at last gives us the eternal joys of Heaven,” said fervent Sister Louisa.

Thus, one by one, the sisters took final leave of the girl, each with sensations of motherly love in her heart for the unfortunate one who had been so near to them. They had never loved any patient so dearly as they had loved *Le petite Aimee*; her undone condition had won their sympathies.

At ten o'clock a cab stood at a door of the hospital, and the patient was placed in it and whirled away, all unconscious of temporal or spiritual things.

She awoke next morning in a strangely beautiful place, but there was no evidence that she noticed the change. Valera was perfectly satisfied that his charge was in a most proper place, and was quite anxious to learn if the scientific skill of M. Guzoit would prove available in restoring *Aimee* to reason. His expenses were necessarily great, and he was aware that he would be compelled to work industriously in order to provide for himself and his charge. He was not disheartened, notwithstanding the fact that his ability to earn money had never been put to such a severe test, and he did not doubt for a moment but that he would be able to meet his expenses without hardship; so, with strong arms and good intentions, he labored on. He had learned to love the sweet-faced girl, in a kind of a way, and felt that her destiny and his destiny were to be indissoluble.

For more than a year there was but little change in the situation. Regularly he had visited the Guzoit place, and always with the same result, or, rather, with no result, for he was informed each time that the patient did not improve. On all occasions he found her dull and seemingly oblivious to her surroundings. He was informed that she had violent attacks, during which she became almost unmanageable; ordinarily, however, she was submissive. On the occasion of each visit he went away with a sad heart; to see her thus was, in itself, a source of great pain; to feel that she would never regain the use of her mental faculties was infinitely more painful. He did not have time to get discouraged; his duties were too pressing, and with true Spartan heroism and, I was about to say, stoicism, he continued his labor of love, feeling that in keeping her where she would receive the best attention he was doing his whole duty. He had made some inquiry, with a view of obtaining a knowledge of *Aimee's* home and friends, but, having left the matter of investigation in the hands of Dr. Lemoine, he had not been as zealous in the matter as he would otherwise have

been. Of one thing he was about convinced, that the girl had been brought by the would-be assassins from Louisville, Kentucky, although the men went away in an opposite direction. About a year after he had arrived at this conclusion, he thought of making a personal effort to find her friends in that city, and in order to do that he wrote a lengthy letter to the Chief of Police, and gave him a full history of the case. Greatly to his surprise he received a letter from that worthy which seemed to throw a strong light on the mystery. It read thus :

POLICE HEADQUARTERS, LOUISVILLE, KY.

JUAN VALERA, *St. Louis, Mo.*

DEAR SIR.—In answer to your letter of advice, will say that you have thrown a great light on a great mystery. On the night of July fourth, 18—, a young woman, answering accurately your description, disappeared from this place in a very mysterious manner, and, despite all our efforts, we have never been able to find a clew to her whereabouts, my men never deeming it necessary to hunt outside the city for her. She was an actress, very beautiful, talented, and spoke several languages, and was most fluent in French. She had many admirers, but refused all offers of marriage, as she was striving to rise in her profession. I think she was certainly of French descent, and her name was Amelia Burgoyne. She had only one relative here—her aged mother—who survived her daughter's disappearance only a short time, and left no property. The girl wore a costly diamond ring on the index finger of the right hand—a present from an admirer. She had it on the night of her disappearance, and there is no doubt in my mind but that she was decoyed into some vile place in this city, robbed, and, perhaps, outraged, and in resisting, was dangerously injured and seemingly murdered. This is my theory, and was at the time, for, on the evening of her disappearance, one of the force noticed her entering what was known to him as a house of bad repute. When the news of the girl's disappearance reached us, I had the inmates of the disreputable house I mention arrested, but they protested their innocence, and, as we had only strong suspicion against them, were compelled to let them go free. You undoubtedly have this girl in your possession, but, as her friends would have no interest in her now, and as her only relation is dead, I think you had better allow her to remain in St. Louis, in some public asylum, unless she regains her reason, in which case

she would return here. Anything further from you will be thankfully received.

Yours, truly,

BENJ. F. DAVIS.

P. S.— Since writing the above have learned from a former companion of the girl's, that she has a small wart on the front left side of her head, which is not visible except when the hair is brushed aside.

B. F. D., Chief of Police.

Valera had noticed a costly diamond ring on the girl's hand as she lay upon the ground where the villains sought to bury her. It flashed and sparkled in the light of the lantern. Had heard one of the men say when he pulled it off: "Boys, it's a regular sparkler, and worth enough to build a house." To which the voice from the tomb made answer, and said: "Better throw it away; sich things air sometimes easy to 'dentify, and often git a man's throat in the noose." He had never noticed the wart spoken of by the chief of police, but on the occasion of his next visit to the asylum, spoke of the matter, and Madame Guzoit made an examination of the girl's head, and sure enough, on the left side of her head, well concealed, was a wart. These things convinced Valera that he had solved the mystery connected with the affair, discovered the real name of the unfortunate young woman, and, also, that she was to be a perpetual charge to him unless he chose to turn her over to some charitable institution. Why should he care for Amelia Burgoyne? Who was *she*? Why should he toil unceasingly for her comfort and welfare? She was a stranger, an actress, without home or friends; an outcast from society; a chattering idiot, with no hope of rising above the mental status of an idiot, under any circumstances. After all, would she not fare as well in a public mad-house? Were they not all fitted up expensively and with a view of providing for every demand of the unfortunates, in a most humane manner? Certainly they were, and why should he be so much concerned about this lovely actress, who had been fastened upon him in such a strange way? For a moment, a fierce longing to go back to his old

vagabondish ways, returned; and he thought of the old days when he wandered, free from care, by the side of mountain streams; or through green meadows; or slept in the soft summer night by the hedge; with no other ambition than to enjoy life, in his own way, and to acknowledge responsibility to no man. But the struggle was brief; striking the table before him with his clenched fist, he said, hotly: "No! by the gods I am a new man. The old man of the past is buried forever. Henceforth I shall live to be useful, or not at all. I will be to her a true friend, and nothing shall tempt me from the path of my chosen duty. I will never forsake her. She is helpless and friendless, and I have none other to love, or befriend." And Valera mused away, in communion with his better self, until he was strong again. But the pathway of Jean Valera was not to be strewn with flowers. He little thought that Providence would interfere with his interests and purposes; but such was the case. Perhaps it was the will of Providence, that he should be put to a severe test; that his strong nature should receive burdens almost too great for human nature to bear.

I think it was more than two years after he entered the office of the daily *Republican*, when his troubles commenced. Up to this time he had been able to meet his current expenses and lay by, each week, a snug sum for a "rainy day." By and by the "rainy day" came, and it came with great force.

One night he was not in his accustomed place, but was lying on his bed at the hotel flushed with fever, which hung to him for more than two months, leaving him weak and exhausted, both physically and financially. His reserve fund had dwindled away, but he was not in debt, being able to liquidate every claim against him. Before he was sufficiently recuperated he returned to his cases at the *Republican* office, and, for awhile, worked far beyond his strength, thinking to make up for lost time. I think he would have regained his former strength, and, perhaps, been stronger than before, had

he been prudent, but he was not prudent. Constant exposure and overwork brought on an attack of rheumatism in his leg (not the cork one), and he suffered intensely. Each of my readers who have had rheumatism in his leg will understand what I mean, when I say that he suffered intensely. He struggled bravely to stand up to his work, having always before him the pale, pleading face of Amelia Burgoyne; for her sake he must walk and not faint, for her he must be brave, and suffer all pain, that she might remain, at her beautiful home, under the care of M. Guzoit and his wife. If his own welfare had been at stake, he could have had time to rest, but as it was, there was absolutely no stopping place; he must work or relinquish his cherished designs. He must work constantly or see his *Le petite Aimee* drift into the keeping of others, and become an object of the most abject charity, and, strange as it may seem, he did not, under the circumstances, consider her an object of charity. His earnings decreased, on account of his inability to work with his usual vigor; he received a stipulated sum for every thousand "m's" placed on his "galleys," and, therefore, he was interested in the arithmetic of his labors. I think rheumatism an invention of Satan, and can not believe that it was ever intended as an instrument to be used in carrying out the designs of our Heavenly Father, although I am aware that many well-meaning persons hold that tribulation is necessary to the development of Christian character. I am sorry to say that it did not cause Valera to assume a heavenly frame of mind, for he swore viciously whenever the intolerable pains would seize him. This is one reason why I think it can not be utilized as a means of grace. I admit that I have seen several old, and a few young persons, who were all drawn out of shape by the terrible disease, and they were of good repute, and retained a true Christian character. Yet, I firmly believe that these persons could have been consistent Christians if they had never been chastened and purified by rheumatism. I

do not think any man ever fully realized how vain and fleeting were the things of time, until he suffered with rheumatism or neuralgia. And he never understood, fully, the reason why good people were ready and anxious to enter upon the duties of the celestial world until rheumatism singled him out from among the gay and thoughtless throng. After awhile the pains, pangs and penalties shifted to Valera's shoulder and arm, and if it had been troublesome before, it was now doubly so, insomuch as it directly interfered with his work, for he used his left hand in holding his composing stick, and, while it was not in active motion, yet he must use it, and every time he moved that arm it caused him intense pain.

His situation was becoming very unpleasant; he could scarcely meet his expenses, although he had removed his quarters to the cheapest boarding house to be found. The merry click, click, click of the metal as it went into his composing stick had dwindled down to what sounded to him like a laborious thud, thud, thud, and it was, indeed, slow work. The numerous typos in the office were sympathetic, and would, doubtless, have aided him very materially, had he complained or asked for help; but not being fully aware of Valera's pressing need, contented themselves by words of sincere sympathy, which were received gratefully, but with a conscious knowledge that they were of no financial benefit, and could not be used to his advantage at his boarding house, nor to pay M. Guzoit's charges. A certain amount *must* be earned each month, to pay *Aimee's* keepers, and as this was now about equal to the amount earned by him, his own expenses must be lessened in some way. The keeper of the boarding house, with an eye single to business, and exclusive to sympathy, demanded prompt payment at the end of each week.

One week, in setting aside the usual amount for M. Guzoit, he found himself one dollar short. What could he do? Importune some brother printer for the shortage? Never! During his career as a typo, he had been too high minded to

accept aid from any source. The pawn-broker had been his friend in times past; why not use him now? A silver watch and gold chain of best make were immediately offered a hook-nose gentleman, whose rabbinical appearance was the only element of honesty about him. Valera was offered five dollars and accepted it. This bridged the chasm for a week, but, to his dismay, he found his left arm growing worse and the pain of a more excruciating character. On Monday and Tuesday nights he managed to hold his composing stick, but on Wednesday night found it impossible to raise the offending arm to the top of his case. Against the earnest protest of his fellows he continued work, using only his right arm, making a feeble endeavor to earn something, in this unnatural and laborious way. He was allowed to hold his case because he had won the esteem of every one connected with the establishment and his services seemed indispensable. At the end of the week he found his earnings much less than on the previous week; he was several dollars short of enough to pay M. Guzoit; and a monthly payment was now due. He visited the rabbinical pawn-broker and secured five dollars on a fine overcoat, which, added to his accumulations, was enough to pay M. Guzoit. But only one dollar remained. A week's board bill was due. What should he do? How could he face the musical instrument at his boarding house? But he did, and was told that he must change his lodging place and he did so, that is, he made headquarters at the *Republican* office building, and, during each day, found an opportunity to take a nap, in various out-of-the-way places. He could not descend to the free lunch-counter, but lunched on cheese and crackers, and every thing, and any thing, that was cheap and could be used as food. But this way of living was not satisfactory to Dame Nature, and as Valera's blood was impoverished he could not hope to become rugged again unless he had proper food and a reasonable amount of sleep. But he plodded along, sometimes not being able to

work more than one hour in twenty-four, and earning scarcely enough to keep soul and body together. Simpson, the foreman, asked him if it would not be better for him to rest up awhile, and Valera answered that that would be the worst thing for him to do, that the way to get rid of rheumatism was to work and keep the joints limber. Not a single typo knew that their highly esteemed fellow-craftsman was at the point of starvation, and mentally tortured because of anxiety about the unfortunate *Aimee*. You see he was one of those men who retain their own affairs, even from near friends, having about him an air of good breeding and courtesy, which made his private affairs not matters of public interest. For he said to the inquisitive by action, "All things are lawful in daily converse save my private affairs, therefore, spare my feelings by conversing about other matters."

Weeks went by without bringing relief, and his strength was barely enough to earn the meager pittance for his own scanty fare, and he became discouraged. Not being able to meet the monthly charges of M. Guzoit, he told that gentleman the exact condition of affairs, and was told to free his mind altogether from the matter until he was strong enough to work again. M. Guzoit further said that usually he was very strict about money matters, but he had become strongly interested in the case of *Le petite Aimee*, and would not willingly see her placed in a public asylum. Much relieved, Valera returned to the *Republican* office, and on that very night his rheumatism shifted to his right shoulder, and he was as helpless as a baby, so far as earning a livelihood was concerned. Then, of course, you say he stated his case to the printers and accepted their aid, but such was not the case. He loafed around amongst them, the hungriest man that ever resisted the temptation to eat from a charity bread-basket, and good humoredly bore his afflictions. He would rather starve than beg, but one of his comrades noticed that he was growing thinner and paler; it was Burrows, a good natured,

free, and loose kind of a young man, who was a friend to everybody except himself. Burrows told his comrades that Valera looked hungry, and was sure the man was suffering for proper food. The boys, one and all, besought Valera to allow them to aid him, but he hotly refused, saying that he would be all right in a short time; but continued exposure, loss of sleep, and want of nourishing food, caused him to grow weaker daily, and one night he fainted in the composing room. He was starving.

Perhaps he was a fool after all.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PORTRAIT UNVEILED.

Thalia Graydon O'Leeds, as she called herself, was an artist of rare culture and attainment, and would, undoubtedly, have made a sensation in the world of art, if she had not, in an evil hour, consented to enter the realm of wedlock — a place where so much "sweetness is wasted on the desert air," and so many double roses "blush unseen," and so much soul-life is crushed by the weight of hum-drum responsibilities. Notwithstanding the disadvantages of married life, she had made rapid progress in her beloved profession, and had executed many fine pictures, for which she had received much praise and some money; the praise came from high sources in the ranks of her fraternity, and the money from people who were desirous of purchasing a reputation for culture, and a standing in fashionable society, as cheaply as possible.

Now, I think I have established the fact that the Graydons were all high tension people, each after a different design, and Thalia was more passionate and more in earnest, than any other member of the family. Spirituality was dreamy and passive, and bewitchingly beautiful, in the black-

eyed Sybarite, Aggie; but Thalia's spirituality was active, and demanded exercise and air; she was less dreamy than Aggie, more enthusiastic and sincere than Frossie had been, and with a greater capacity to love than either. When her friends called to see her they were sure to find the hazel-haired beauty in her studio, hard at work, touching and retouching, with master hand, the exquisite paintings abounding there. Everything, from a calico cow to a hawk-headed goddess of the Nile, was deemed of sufficient importance to be finished with patience and skill. Therefore, she had that estimable boon, force of character, and a thorough training, by competent teachers, had developed her to a great extent, and, as I said awhile ago, marriage was the only obstacle which she could not overcome, and which denied her a place among the stars. Her studio was a splendidly lighted room, expensively furnished and lavishly adorned with pictures of her own handiwork. Nymphs, fauns, and other sleepy creatures, dog-faced deities, pictures after the old masters, landscapes and portraits were scattered around in profusion, charming the eye and satisfying the most critical lover of the beautiful. She excelled in portrait painting, and would surely have become known to fame, had it not been for the impediment already mentioned. Of late she had been absorbed in the painting of a portrait—so intensely absorbed that she could not keep her mind and heart away from her work; the subject was with her continually, although invisible to other eyes. She was painting a presence, and this "presence in the room" was not dimly defined, but came to her clearly and with certainty; in the morning, at noon, in the dewy evening, and in the silent watches of the night, it came, noiselessly poising in the air, with an old-time grace and expression, pleading with dumb lips and bringing sight to sense, and understanding to the accoustic apparatus of the soul. It was the form of her loved and lost sister, Frossie. Yes, the spirit of Frossie Graydon was in the air, the tomb could not hold

her from the eyes of the loving Thalia, and so upon the canvas grew the features, so animated and wonderful in life, so sacred and worshipful in death. The grave is not deep enough to hold our dead; from the dim corridors of the dark world they come, and Heaven is not high enough to hide them from our view; neither depth, nor height, nor length, nor breadth, nor darkness, nor anything can keep the dead from the living. The eyes of love follow the vanishing forms through the gates of the tomb, and they return in bright habiliments, when they have tasted the fruits of the resurrection. Love *will* have it this way, and love is the only safe anchor, the only guide to the royal highway of the celestial city, and let us, with fear and trembling, realize that we are always in the sacred presence of our dead.

Little Frossie Graydon O'Leeds, the fair-haired daughter of the artistic young lady, was a source of constant delight to her mother; more of a delight than was Tiberius, Jr., the younger of the two children. Thalia would have it that little Frossie was the very image of the one who was sleeping so quietly out yonder in the cemetery, although I am sure she was mistaken; the hair was several shades darker, and the eyes were not so sparkling, nor so velvety blue; she had some of the characteristics of the elder Frossie, and what nature failed to reproduce Thalia's imagination supplied. Who has not traced the lineaments of a dead friend, on the countenance and in the actions of the living? Love deciphers what nature withholds, when the spirit of the dead controls the will; and the color of the eyes, the flowing tresses of hair, tones of voice, movements of the body—as remembered things from the old days—are molded anew in the fervency of the brain and heart, and transferred to the living, by those who love and worship at an empty shrine.

Aggie and her two children were living at the family mansion, and had been since the departure of Weiler; and the four children were petted and spoiled by Nathaniel, and

carefully trained and cared for by Minerva, who, on more than one occasion, had spanked them with genuine, orthodox enthusiasm, with a view to enlarging their moral sensibilities, and increasing their capacities for heeding religious instruction, but they loved her very dearly nevertheless. Terp had learned to endure them; in fact she had learned to endure everything, even the geese in the barnyard. Geese and children occupied about the same place in her affections, though I think her preference was strongly in favor of the geese. To the geese and children she was alike indifferent, being altogether interested in the dissolving views of her matrimonial schemes, of which she was excessively prolific, and wholly unconcerned as to results and comments, or criticism of her friends.

Probably you have wondered why Germain dropped out of the story so unceremoniously. However, he's to blame for my seeming neglect, and I do not think a review of his daily life would either be interesting or edifying to the reader. In fact, I do not think you would care to hear anything further about him if you knew the truth, for when you knew him he was a noble specimen of manhood. Since then, I am sorry to relate, he has degenerated to a level with the brutes. Shut suddenly away from the anticipated bliss of wedded life, with all its promises of good, with all its wealth of happiness, his passionate nature gave way, and he sought relief in the circean cup. He loved Frossie Graydon, and it broke his heart to give her up; his blood was frozen by the great and enduring agony which had fallen upon him; and the gloom that surrounded him was impenetrable and pathless. Like countless numbers of other men he sought relief in oblivion; and misery preserved in alcohol will keep indefinitely; so Germain found it. It was a horrible thing for him to lose all self respect, and be willing to reel through the streets, a common sot, but he cared for nothing; the panorama of life was passing slowly; he saw, each day, pictures of men, women, and

children, painted landscapes, animals of all kinds, creeping along the streets, or feeding in pastures done in oil; amid the busy whirl of the business world he was alone, gazing stolidly, indifferently, and with drunken stupidity, at the shifting scenes of the sliding canvas, whereon the dead things of time were slipping into eternity. He had adopted a cowardly policy, for any man is a coward who can not meet his destiny face to face. With fatalistic certainty he was losing his grip on the world; day by day he became less sensible to shame, and the pictures around him became less attractive; and his friends were less anxious to save him from what seemed inevitable ruin. Day by day the poor fellow watched the panorama of passing events with dull eyes and dazed intellect; to him life was ended, and he prayed for the time to come when the fleeting show, on the whirling canvas, would grow dark and cease to be. He only knew that he was alone with a great sorrow, and, in a weak, human way, was striving to find, upon the waves of Lethe, a balm for his wounded and broken life. Blame him not; his ideas were intensely human, and by no means original.

Thalia Graydon O'Leeds sat one evening, gazing, Parrhasius-like, upon her canvas, dreaming of the days when the sweet face before her was a reality; her day's task was ended, and she was weary. Her easel was in front of her, but she was not in her studio; in this room she had worked at the portrait before her. It was an elegant apartment, with soft, noiseless carpets, and deep, luxurious rugs of elegant designs upon the floor; the fire-place was a thing of beauty, the tiles being covered with bright flowers. The furniture was unique, and on the walls was a costly Venetian mirror, with here and there a costly, deep-toned painting. A metal pot full of cat-tails stood on the floor, and a bunch of peacock feathers stood near the easel in a large brazen vase. A book-case, filled with choice literature, stood on one side of the room, and several easy chairs indicated that it was a family resort;

such was not a literal fact, although O'Leeds and others of the family sometimes found it pleasant to while away the evening in this apartment with Thalia.

Tiberius came to this room on this particular evening, and, after giving his wife the usual amount of praise and extravagant promises of future glory, said gravely :

“I saw poor Germain this evening, and he was so thoroughly under the influence that he did not recognize me, although I passed him face to face.”

“Poor fellow, he will grieve himself to death ; can not something be done for him, for her sake ? She loved him so dearly.”

“Every effort to save him has been of no avail ; I can not give him up, but in my opinion he will not reform, and you must be prepared to hear of his death in some horrible way.”

“Oh, Tiberius, we must save him. There is within him the elements of true nobility, and if we can make him see his error, the wrong he is doing himself and society, will he not pause, at least to consider the counsel of his friends ?”

“We have tried every plan and device to win him from his cups, but without success. Yesterday morning I met him and talked long and earnestly with him, pleading as I would with my own brother, for I feel as deeply interested in him as if he were my very own brother. He seemed to care nothing for my talk, merely remarking, with a melancholy shake of the head, ‘The game’s up, and the play is about played out,’ after which he left me and entered a saloon.”

“Oh, Tiberius,” cried Thalia, actually shedding tears, “he is surely killing himself with his morbid fancies and excessive drinking. How sad it is to *think* that we have not been willing to lay aside every selfish project and pleasure, and devote our entire time and attention to him—our noble brother, who has been so harshly dealt with, and whose strength gave way under his load.”

“Do not blame yourself, Thalia, for what can not be

remedied; we have done our duty, and will continue to do so, but how can we be of any service to him or bring him again to the right path, unless he is willing to accept our advice and company? He refuses to visit or receive visits from us, simply because he feels his own degradation and shame."

"We *must* in some way get him under our influence; invite him to visit our home; take no excuse; he must and shall come, and by constant appeal to his better nature, I am sure we shall win our cause."

"And my little diplomat will outgeneral King Alcohol," said O'Leeds, rapturously. "But how can we get him into our house?"

"Remember our arrangement for surprising father, who knows nothing about this portrait; on the evening of the fourth day of July we will take it to the drawing-room with a heavy veil about it. Invite Germain here to see the picture. He will not refuse."

"A capital idea," said Tiberius, but further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of little Frossie, who climbed upon her mother's lap and said, looking at the portrait:

"Mamma, that's big me again?"

"Yes, darling, that's big me," said Thalia, smiling, for she remembered telling the little one, a few days previous, that the portrait would *be her* image when *she* become a young lady.

It was now late in June, and Tiberius O'Leeds was determined that his wife's plans should be fully tested, and sought Germain immediately, and found him on the verge of "jim-jams," entirely disqualified for understanding an invitation, or anything else, for that matter. But not discouraged, the Good Samaritan tried again and again, until Germain promised to attend the ceremony of unveiling the portrait of his unfortunate Frossie. To see again that lovely face, even though it could not speak to him the familiar words of love,

was a thing the poor inebriate could not resist. No other consideration would have been strong enough to draw him away, for an evening, from his drunken companions and the saloon. With great joy Tiberius hastened to inform his wife of his success, and Thalia cautioned her husband to watch Germain sharply when the time came for the fulfillment of the promise. But the stubbornly dissipated young man required no watching, and prepared to appear before his old-time friends sober, and with an air of respectability. It requires some nerve and heroic fortitude for an inebriate to sober up, for a special occasion, and Germain was full of dead liquor when the appointed day arrived, therefore, he was intensely miserable and moody.

On the evening of the fourth day of July, the entire family, including Germain, assembled in the drawing-room, at the request of Thalia and Aggie. Minerva was just the same as when we first met her in the opening chapter, though a little paler, and, perhaps, a trifle careworn, but there was about her the same air of patient resignation and Christian fortitude. That she had been tortured almost beyond human endurance by the cruel fate of her beloved daughter, was undoubtedly true; that she had conquered self by faith, was apparent. The four children were special objects of her affection, and this evening she gave them more than usual attention. Germain was reserved, and had but little to say in answer to the queries of his friends. With all the nervousness of one who is harrowed by conscious guilt, and unstrung by debauchery and dissipation, he awaited the beginning of the end, glancing ever and anon at the veiled canvas that hung on an easel in the corner of the room. His usually handsome form and face were still handsome, although the marks of dissipation were plainly visible, and his evident embarrassment made him an object of deep solicitude on the part of his gentle friends.

Nathaniel Graydon was seated in a large arm chair, and,

I am sorry to say, in personal appearance he was not as becoming as in other days; his clothing was not properly adjusted, nor was he as trim and polished as in former times; his general appearance indicated that he was growing careless about his attire; his face was hard set, and about the corners of his mouth was a sinister expression; he had never rallied from the blow received in the loss of his daughter, and it was evident that the sarcasm of destiny rested heavily upon him. Of late, in spite of his wife's prayers and entreaties, he had become a convert to the sophistries of infidelity, or at least was ready to abandon his faith in the fatherhood of God. This evening he found a passage in the elder Pliny, which suited him so well that he read it aloud; it was in the following terrible language:

"All religion is the offspring of necessity, weakness and fear. What God is, if in truth he be anything distinct from the world! is beyond the compass of man's understanding to know. But it is a foolish delusion, which has sprung from human weakness, and human pride, to imagine that such an infinite spirit would concern himself about the petty affairs of men. The vanity of man, and his insatiable longing after existence, have led him, also, to dream of a life after death. A being full of contradictions, he is the most wretched of creatures, since the other creatures have no wants transcending the bounds of their nature. Man is full of desires that reach to infinity, and can never be satisfied. His nature is a lie uniting the greatest poverty with the greatest pride. Among these so great evils, the best thing God has bestowed on man is the power to take his own life."

"Exactly, exactly!" said Nathaniel, laying aside the book. "Pliny tells the truth, and though the truth is very bitter sometimes, we must accept it because it is the truth."

"Nathaniel," said Minerva, "dost know that truth is from God, and that vain sophistry is from man? Who follows the way of truth will find God. The doctrines of infidelity are bubbles that float majestically into the air, sometimes very beautiful, and yet they are empty nothings that pass away as flames of spent candles, leaving mankind in

darkness more terrible than would have been had their torches of philosophy never been lighted."

"But all things are subject to decay and change, therefore the ideas of men must change, and their doctrines decay. Truth, alone, is immutable, and will finally triumph. Skepticism is blazing a road to a new heaven, and if the advocates of infidelity are mistaken, their doctrines will pass away to give room to better ideas. All fallacious things must pass away; such is the process of truth."

"Dost remember," said Minerva, "these words, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away?' Nathaniel, search not in vain philosophy after God; He is not there; in the depths of your own heart thou mayest find him. Time is too short to blaze new ways to Heaven; the old way is safe for travel, and a very pleasant thoroughfare it is. A star went before the wise men of the East, and stood over the place where the young child lay; the celestial infant went out of the cave of beasts into the Bible, and the same star came and stood over the place where the young child is lying, directing, not only the wise, but all men to Heaven. False philosophy will fade and pass away, the demi-gods of fame will mingle their bones in the dust without having done anything for their kind except creating doubt, distrust, and dismay. Why read Pliny when you have St. Paul? Why read Voltaire when you have Solomon? Why read Ingersoll when you have Isaiah? Christ is down among men; God is above the stars. You may find God, if you choose, but it must be through Christ."

"If God is so good, and so compassionate, and so unwilling to suffer injustice, why did he snatch Frossie from my arms and from my life, and make my old age so barren and bitter? Why did he change the current of my being and leave me a sordid wretch, quibbling about the road to Heaven, and writhing under the lash of destiny? Why did he make me so unhappy that I loathe the sight of my fellow men?"

God says he is able to keep us 'to the uttermost,' and then leaves us to the decrees of chance. Everything we have, or hope for, is insecure and rests in the shadows of doom and doubt. If God is not a God of mercy and tenderness, he can not be utilized by the world—for the wounded soul of humanity is pleading for mercy."

"A loving father loves his wayward boy, but the wicked boy will not acknowledge his father's goodness. Evil exists because men will have it so. If thou art wounded, God will heal thee; if thou dost sin, He will forgive; if thou art lost, He will find thee; there is a fountain opened for uncleanness, but it will not come to thee, thou must go to the fountain. Christ told the sick man to arise and walk; the man had it in his power to lie still or to arise. So it is with thee, my husband; if thou would'st receive mercy, thou must be *willing* to receive it. It was truly sad to lose our daughter, and for the time it almost killed me. I have suffered as only a mother can suffer, when her best treasure has been taken away; but through it all I have found the strong arm of my Saviour to lean upon."

Nathaniel Graydon was not converted to his wife's doctrines; but he was silenced and softened by her earnest, pleading endeavor to establish the claims of her faith.

For a few moments the silence was oppressive, and Germain became so nervous that all eyes were turned upon him; he was almost suffocated by the atmosphere of refinement and gentle breeding: not that he was not, by nature, a gentleman and a scholar, but because he was conscious that he had sacrificed all right and title to be called such. Conscious guilt makes a true gentleman ill at ease, in the presence of the pure in heart; and one is awkward and depressed when he feels himself below the moral standard of his companions. Add to these natural emotions, the unnatural and morbid sensitiveness caused by his temporary abstinence, and you have nervous, absent-minded Germain as he appeared on that occasion.

Thalia, after some conversation, concluded that the hour had arrived for the unveiling of the portrait, and, with some misgivings as to results, with the assistance of O'Leeds, carried the easel and its burden to the center of the room, where the gas jet could throw a proper light upon it. "Five years ago, this night," she said, "the ewe lamb of our flock was stolen away forever. Each one, and all of us felt the force of that terrible blow and that our misfortune was too great for human endurance; we have lived with our sorrow, but how mournful is retrospection; how sad the days and hours since she went away. Tumultuous grief gave way to resignation, and resignation is but a name for sorrow that will not die. Oh, our heart strings must be of steel and our mental faculties of most philosophic mould, if we would successfully encounter the awful realities of existence. It is useless to recall the dreadful scenes of that awful night; you all know its horrors in detail; taken from the arms of father, mother, sisters, and the one she loved better than all; torn, in a twinkling, from our bosoms, to meet her God, by the waters of the Ohio; murdered, robbed, and cast into the dark river, and her friends only a short distance away; how terrible it all seemed. I have tried to paint her as she was; but who could do justice to such a one? Who could place upon canvas the ineffable glory of her countenance? Who could paint the illimitable depths of her eyes, and the abundant waves of her magnificent hair? Who could paint the color of her cheeks, or the transparent beauty of the skin? Human skill could not find proper and delicate shades of color; art is vastly inferior to nature, and the difference between man and God is the difference between art and nature. I have labored long and earnestly to produce upon canvas a correct image of our darling; and to bring to you all, and especially to my dear papa, an accurate portrait of one who was made up of loveliness, and who faded from our lives so suddenly and mysteriously."

Here Thalia pulled a silken cord, and the portrait was unveiled. Frossie was before them, on the canvas, in all her transcendent beauty. The picture was a trifle more serious than the original, but there was the same graceful curve of the mouth, the same oval of the face, the hair raised a trifle off the straight, open forehead, and then fell in soft waves upon her neck. The figure was standing with clasped hands, and her face wore a rapt expression, as if entirely oblivious to all surroundings. Thalia had noticed this expression of rapture upon Frossie's face, and the same effective pose; it was while they were listening to some soul-thrilling music made by a band of great musicians; she thought she had never seen her sister so lovely and so passionately attractive as on that occasion, and faithfully she had carried her impressions to the canvas, so that the eager and earnest soul of the model might be apparent; for Thalia, better than any other being, knew that beneath Frossie's gaiety, and under her exterior of careless, good humor, and worldliness, was an impassioned soul.

In a moment they surrounded the easel, with expressions of surprise and pleasure, not unmingled with sighs of regret.

Nathaniel was pleased beyond expression, for he did not know of the existence of the portrait until it was unveiled. Long and earnestly the strong man gazed upon it, with emotions too strong for utterance, feasting his eyes and soul upon the form and features of his dead darling, with heart swelling with emotions. By and by he walked back to his arm chair, and sinking into its depths, covered his face with his hands, and recalled the happy days when she was with him, the pride of his heart, the joy of his household, the hope and comfort of his old days. Strong men are weak when they war against fate, and weak in adversity if they depend upon their own strength, but doubly weak and helpless when death invades the home circle and bears a loved one to the icy domain of the king of terrors.

Minerva, to whom the portrait was familiar, could not restrain her tears when she beheld her husband's agitation and remembered the sorrowful scenes of the past.

Terpsichore examined the portrait critically, and coolly said it was a "very pretty picture, but the hands are too big."

The fool seamstress, I regret to say, deemed it her duty to show a vast deal of emotion when she gazed upon the features on the canvas, because, she reasoned, she was well paid for her services by the Graydons, and could afford to weep; and in a vigorous and obvious endeavor to strangle her feelings, and, at the same time earn her wages, she dropped her false teeth from her mouth to the floor, and said, "Oh, my!"

Germain was visibly affected, and had not anticipated such a life-like painting and image of his lost love, nor had he accurately weighed the consequences of becoming sober. All the past came to him with renewed energy; fond memories of other days of perfect bliss, when she was with him, came once more, and the past five years seemed a century of misfortune and misery. Misery is long; bliss is absurdly short. Joy, as every writer who has dipped his pen in the Castalian fountain has observed, is fleeting; misery is durable and more conservative. Joy kindles the eye; misery kills the soul and assassinates ambition. Good fortune fills a man with excellent opinions of his neighbor and himself. Ill fortune breeds disgust and builds castles of folly and despair. Like the curse that broke the "magic mirror of the Lady of Shalott," was Germain's misfortune; it had dethroned him and sent him adrift in strange waters, making him a driveling sot and forcing upon him the damnation of evil doing. As he pondered upon the unreturning pleasures of the past, the unfruitful present, and the unpropitious future, the pent-up tide of his sorrow gave way, and he sobbed like a child.

In tears he found his only relief; they were the language of his grief, and in their eloquence he found strength.

CHAPTER XX.

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

Mrs. Aggie Graydon Weiler was unusually dreamy and distant on this occasion, and there was about her that evanescent air so common to the posie twisters of these times. It was evident to Terp that a poem was working its way to the surface, and, as Aggie held a bundle of manuscript in her hand, it was safe to surmise they were to have it in pamphlet form.

By and by the poet arose and announced her intention of reading a poem, which she called "To Our Darling Dead." It was as follows :

Oh, valley of the silent host !
Oh, city of the weary !
Thou art the end of man's vain boast,
The deep, dark home of his dim ghost,
A kingdom all adreary.

A sullen empire — narrow bed,
By mirth and dole forsaken,
When all our love lies cold addead,
And all that can be has been said
By lips that will not waken.

Forever in the dust of Thee,
We lay our treasures weeping ;
Forever to the dusk of Thee,
Eternal as eternity,
The tide of life is creeping.

Perchance it is not death to die ;
That loss and pain are fleeting ;
That silent voices make reply,
When God doth give a reason why,
And wake to heaven's greeting.

The ebon wings of all my grief,
Are falling, falling round me ;
My aching heart finds no relief,
The numbing pain called " Life " is brief ;
And deep despair hath bound me.

The mellow days of long ago —
Oh, sweetest breeze of healing !
Now ebb and flow, and come and go ;
So sad and low, so soft and slow ;
Through all my senses stealing.

As daylight sinks upon the sea,
In quiet splendor gleaming,
So slips the dream of youth, ah me !
So fades the lotus land TO BE !
So ends a blissful seeming.

Down in a green and lovely vale,
The softest sighs are sighing ;
And bloom and beauty but avail,
To whisper all the dreadful tale ;
To hearts that are adying.

A solemnly sweet domain,
A wonderland of treasure ;
A resting-place for heart and brain,
When all of love is vain, is vain,
And life has lost its pleasure.

The incense of my fleeting years,
Is in this vale of beauty ;
Where come not any idle fears,
Nor grief, nor pain, nor bitter tears ;
For all is love and duty.

And I am there, and she is there ;
The past is newly beaming,
And here and there, and everywhere
Her soul, as soft as summer air,
O'ershadows all my dreaming.

I hear her footsteps in the air;
I feel her presence near me;
I stroke the sun-bright silken hair;
I kiss the dear lips, soft and rare;
And she doth never fear me.

Oh, loving eyes that shine and shine,
And fairest face of faces !
Oh, dove-eyed houri ! rich as wine
Is every tender glance of thine,
And sweet thy long embraces.

These are but dear remembered things,
That come to me so sweetly ;
And from the vale a whirr of wings,
And half forgotten music brings
The days that went so fleetly.

I care not for the smiles of fame,
For she has gone forever ;
She died to save a spotless name,
And better far is death than shame,
And rest than life's endeavor.

Oh, why did all the angels sleep !
When her sweet life was blighted?
And why did not the strong arm keep
Our darling from the awful deep?
By death and doom benighted.

My heart will break at last, at last ;
Oh ! why had we no warning?
The bloom of life is in the past ;
The future seems so dull and vast —
A night without a morning.

And yet I would not call thee back,
Nor wake thee from thy slumbers ;
"To writhe anew upon the rack ;"
To walk the bitter, barren track ;
Or sing love's dismal numbers.

Oh, sister, sleep, profound and deep !
Where summer winds are blowing ;
The grave has giv'n to heaven's keep
Thy spirit fair, and therefore sleep
Where summer airs are flowing.

Subsequently I was told by Miss Terp Graydon that there were seventy-five more stanzas to this poem ; I do not believe the assertion of the vicious spinster, but I know that Mrs. Aggie Graydon Weiler was interrupted by a shrill scream, from the shrubbery in front of the house, and the screaming was iterated and reiterated in a most agonizing way. A rush was made for the door, and within a few moments all were on the outside searching in and out among the shrubs for the screamer, but their search was in vain ; and they were about to return to the house, when a long, wailing cry from the other side of the building came to their ears. What could it mean ? There was something in the wild cries that set their blood tingling and thrilled them with a nameless emotion. They rushed pell-mell through the yard, and behind the house found the red-headed seamstress, in a paroxysm of fright.

“I shall swoon on the spot, if somebody don n't hold me up,” she cried, reeling around promiscuously ; whereupon Terp seized a pail of water, standing near at hand, and dashed it all over the inflammatory female, who regained her equilibrium in an amazingly short space of time.

“Did you scream ?” asked Thalia.

“Nary time ; it were it,” replied the seamstress.

“What do you mean ?” queried Thalia.

“Oh Lord, did n't ye see it ? all dressed in white ; afloatin' around through the garden about two feet above the ground ; white ez a sheet, with its long yaller hair aflyin' in the air. It were Miss Frossie's ghost, that's what it were ; and it come a sailin' down the path straight fer me ; and I not bein' able to move a peg, but just a standin' there like a stone statter. By and by it opened its mouth to yell, and I

saw the evening star a shinin' through its head, and sich a yell! May the Lord forgive me ef I did n't think a dozen devils had broke loose; but, ez I said, it come full tilt at me, and I opened my arms to stop it, and it went right through me without stoppin', and sailed away off behind them lilac bushes —"

Here another piercing scream filled the air, and a white figure dashed from behind the bushes mentioned and disappeared around the house. They were all dismayed, for, in the bright moonlight, they had noticed the familiar profile of the departed Frossie. What could it mean? Bent upon solving the mystery, they followed her, and, although they searched every nook and corner of the place, found no trace of her. What was it? Barring the flighty seamstress there was not a superstitious person among them; hence they did not believe they had seen a ghost. Germain was almost uncontrollable. The sight of his lost darling, though it was a dim glimpse, was enough to arouse the lion-like qualities within him, and he determined to ferret the mysterious being who had come, perhaps, to deceive them all, for was not Frossie dead and buried? Then it stood to reason that some one was personating her for a purpose. They all returned to the house except Germain, who continued to wander about the premises in search of the intruder, but it was not for him to discover the whereabouts of the ghostly visitant.

Now, as I have said, none of the Graydons believed in ghosts. In fact, Nathaniel argued that all of the five senses were liable to be deceived, and things, supposed by many to be supernatural, were but vain delusions. "If," said he, "I should walk into a cemetery, and a grave at my very feet should open, and some old friend, long dead, should step forth and grasp my hand and shake it with old-time fervor, I would say, subsequently, that nothing of the kind had happened; that it was merely an optical illusion, and that the senses of touch and sight had been deceived. If one should come

from the grave, and, with familiar conversation, talk of old times, and tell me of things only known to myself; and tell of strange things to come, that *would* come to pass, I should always say that my sense of hearing had been deceived, and that my understanding was defective. If one should come from the grave and offer me some of the fadeless flowers of Paradise, with perfumes far sweeter than those of the flowers of earth; and bring me the ambrosial fruits of the heavenly Canaan; and, though I should eat of the fruit, and inhale the incense of the flowers, and if the spirit should vanish slowly and mysteriously before my face, I would say, smell, you have been deceived! taste, you have not tasted anything! sight, you have not seen anything! brain, you are becoming weak and soft and are easily deluded. No, sir; people see spirits with their minds and not with their eyes, and spirit forms are products of diseased imaginations."

Nathaniel had given expression to such ideas whenever the subject of spookery was under discussion; but what becomes of theory, sometimes, when fact is demonstrated? Here was a live ghost at large on his premises, witnessed by persons of sound mind, and opinions biased against Spiritism. What explanation could be offered? In the language of the profession: "If it was n't a spirit, what was it?" An easy and satisfactory solution was at hand. After a lengthy interval, a sound of music was heard, from a piano, in the unoccupied parlor. All arose and passed into the hallway, stepping very cautiously, and, I doubt, if they ever listened to music half so entrancing and thrilling as what they heard. It was a selection from one of the masters, executed with that exquisite finish and expression which had made Frossie Graydon locally famous, in days gone by, and which was peculiarly her own style. There is an individuality of expression in instrumental music, and two persons cannot execute the same piece of music on the piano with exactly the same expression; there will be a certain something about the

one, and a certain something about the other ; and, although both may be perfect, yet each is perfect in his own way ; it is the soul of the individual that leaps through the blood, fires the brain, and tingles the finger tips, that gives expression to the music, and the soul of the nightingale is not the soul of the thrush. Therefore, I think I am justified in saying that Frossie Graydon had a style of her own, and one that could not be mistaken for another's, by whom it was familiar. Imagine their feelings when they heard the music, and realized that it was Frossie's music. What could it mean ? It meant that Frossie was alive, or that her ghost was on the piano stool, in the dark, thumping a mundane instrument with supermundane zeal. Suddenly the music changed, and Frossie Graydon's matchless, powerful, and melodious voice rang out sweetly, with its old time power to please and fascinate. She — the voice I mean — sang an old love song, which was quite familiar to the listeners. Aggie and Thalia entered the darkened room, softly stepped to the piano, and trembling, stood one on each side of the singer. To say that they were somewhat frightened, would be putting it mildly ; but they reasoned that it was either their sister or her disembodied spirit, and it gave them courage. The singing ceased, and the listeners heard a prolonged struggle, and muttered exclamations and moanings ; they instantly rushed in, headed by Nathaniel, who held a lighted lamp in his hand ; and found Aggie and Thalia with their arms twined around a struggling female, who was growing perceptibly weaker. It required but a single glance to discern that the female was Frossie Graydon, whom they had mourned as dead during the past five years.

What followed beggars description. I would that my pen could portray the ecstatic joy that filled their souls to the brim and overflowed in torrents of bliss. Their pleasure was not unmingled with apprehension, for Frossie had passed into a state of unconsciousness, and required the immediate atten-

tion of the family physician, who prescribed rest and absolute quiet. I wish, I say, that I could give you the scenes as they were, but I can not. For a time they could not believe their senses, and the seamstress, who was thoroughly convinced that it was a spirit, whispered to Terp: "Pinch it, and see if it's hollow?" Terp declined contemptuously; being very proud, at that moment, that she was a strong-minded woman, and not a weak-minded man, and could pass through any kind of an ordeal without flinching, or injury to her sex.

Everybody went stark mad; yes sir! crazy! idiotic! silly and wild. Everybody hugged each other, and kissed each other again and again, and cried and laughed hysterically, and it was enough to upset them, dignity and all. Here was a young lady who had been killed, taken from the Ohio River and buried like a Christian; yet she was alive, and without any reasonable excuse. It is generally conceded that a corpse should remain dead, especially if the funeral expenses have been paid; they had known persons who were moderately dead to recover, but to have one whom they were confident was thoroughly dead, to return so unexpectedly and mysteriously, was more than they were able to comprehend.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MAN WITH A CORK LEG.

Terpsichore Graydon was constitutionally opposed to scenes and sensations of which she was not the source. Therefore, she was somewhat irritated by the great excitement which followed the resurrection of Frossie Graydon.

The news of Frossie's return spread like wild-fire, and for several days the Graydon place was besieged by hundreds of

curious and sympathetic persons, who were really anxious to be of service, as well as to gratify curiosity; but all they could learn was that Frossie Graydon was alive, and that no explanation had yet been offered in regard to her supposed death and burial. Many of the simple-minded people believed there had been a sure enough resurrection, and that the sweet-faced girl, who lay so quietly on her couch, up stairs in a darkened room, into which none were admitted save members of the family and the good physician, would, when able to tell her story, reveal the secrets of the other world, and answer the questions that vexed the patriarch of Uz: "If a man die shall he live again?" Terp did not entertain such ideas for a moment. "She is alive," said she, "but why make such ado about it? I have no doubt but that the mystery will be satisfactorily explained in time; just now, it is hardly a matter in which the public should feel concerned. Altogether it is a family affair."

To see the premises thronged with people, and great crowds filling the house, all anxious to see the one who had been so miraculously restored to the bosom of her family, and to hear the countless expressions of amazement that fell from the lips of the throng, and, at the same time, realize that she was not a party to the affair, was exceedingly annoying to the spinster.

Widow Griggs remarked piously, that it was all the "Lord's doin's," whereupon Terp replied that she did not believe that the Lord had had anything to do with the business, and that it looked more like the work of that nameless creature who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking "whom to devour;" she referred to the whole matter, and not to the restoration of the lost one, for in her own way she was pleased at Frossie's return, and was convinced that if the fair maiden had been alive during the past five years she should have been at home. It certainly was the proper place for a young girl who lacked the discretion of mature years, for

this world is full of men who appear to care for nothing save the smiles and blandishments of soft-eyed school girls, who, in turn, seem to care for nothing save the men. Yes, it was plain to Terp that a young girl's place was at home; and that ogling and angling after husbands should be left to experienced hands, and to females who had outlived the mistaken ideas of youth, and are prepared to choose wisely and circumspectly.

I think it was the third day after Frossie's arrival, very early in the morning, that Terp was walking in the garden among the flowers. She was dressed in a voluminous Mother Hubbard, and was evidently not expecting the well-dressed gentleman, with a cork leg, whom she met at the door of the wigwam. The well dressed gentleman, including the cork leg, started violently and seemed much embarrassed at meeting the spinster, but recovered immediately, and saluted her with an easy grace and dignity that won her admiration. It was no difference to her if he *did* have a cork leg; he was a *man* for a' that.

"Juan Valera, madam, at your service," he said, rather recklessly, considering that he was a stranger.

"You are welcome to my father's hospitalities," said Terp, rather loftily, forgetting that he was a stranger, and remembering only that he was a man, and, aside from her democratic views of the masculine gender, she noticed that he was of suitable age.

The stranger deliberately seated himself upon a rustic bench, and seemed quite at home with his surroundings; my reader, being well acquainted with him, is not surprised at his actions.

"I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Miss Terpsichore Graydon?"

"That is my name," twittered Terp, trembling with illy-concealed excitement, for here was a man who knew her without the formality of an introduction, and a perfect stranger

at that. Perhaps her work of reformation was spreading in social circles, and he had heard of her as a lecturer.

“I have heard of you,” he said, musingly.

Perhaps he had been in town over night, and had heard her name at the hotel.

“Then you know that I lecture, and am trying to solve a great social problem. That is, that I am striving to simplify the matrimonial question, and to equalize the chances between the sexes.”

“Are you not the author of a book called ‘Matrimony Made Easy?’”

“Oh, no; I have not written a book, but I have lectured in all the principal towns and cities in the East, and some in the West.” This was a whopper, but Valera was equal to the occasion, and a mischievous twinkle came into his eyes.

“Yes, I have heard of you in the East, and of your lecture while I was there. It created a great sensation in Eastern society.” This was a great lie.

“Indeed! and have you heard my lecture?”

“No, but I had the pleasure of reading it in full, in one of the New York papers, which had made a short hand report of it when you lectured there, for the benefit of its readers.” This was a colossal falsehood, but it made no difference.

Terp had never been East, and she must have known that he was mistaken; her lecture had never been published, and, I believe, never delivered to any kind of an audience; but here was a man who admitted her genius, and was evidently smitten with her logic.

“I dare to entertain views,” she said “on the subject of marriage which I am aware are not popular with a certain class of over-modest females, who hold up their hands, in holy horror, at the idea of demanding justice and equal rights in the matrimonial market.”

“I am truly glad,” said Valera, with the dangerous twinkle growing more noticeable, “that there is at least one

woman who has the courage to stand firm for her honest convictions and the rights of her sex."

"Thank you, sir," said Terp, seating herself by his side, and adjusting her dapple-gray curls in the most bewitching manner possible; "thank you; it is a great pleasure to me to find a sensible man. I would not have you think, for a moment, that I underestimate and undervalue modesty in female character. In fact, an immodest woman is as repulsive as an immoral woman."

"My ideas exactly," cried Valera, rapturously.

"My object," continued the spinster, "is to benefit both sexes. Some men are entirely too bashful to get a wife; some women are entirely too prudent to get a husband. Do away with the foolish idea that the woman should wait for the man to propose marriage or not get a husband at all, and you give the prudent woman a fair chance to get a husband, and the bashful man would, also, have a better chance."

"Strange," said Valera, musingly, "that these things were never thought of before."

"I very well understand," said Terp, "that society will be conservative upon this question; and I am content to wait, well knowing that the leaven is at work, and the good seed already sown will bring forth abundant harvest. When all women understand that it is an imperative duty to get married, and when all men are convinced that married life is the only true condition of happiness, the world will no longer be filled with miserable old maids and gouty bachelors, to whom the cream of life is sour, and to whom all pleasures are vanity."

"Strange that I never thought of that," said Juan Valera.

"Now, I hold," continued the spinster, "that marriage should be strictly a business affair, and utterly shorn of all sentiment. Love is a matter that should be cultivated, to some extent, after marriage, when the contracting parties are acquainted with each other and are fairly competent to make love. I suppose you are a married man?"

“No, indeed,” rejoined Valera. “I have been looking all my life for a woman who is truly logical and sensible in all things; such a one is hard to find.”

“True,” cried Terp, moving up very close to Valera, “but you will find such a one, I am quite sure, and get married; it’s so nice.”

“I think I would enjoy married life,” said Valera, moving very close to the old maid, with the dangerous twinkle still in his eyes.

“To be sure you would. The testimony of those who have tried it is like the testimony given in a Methodist classroom, all one way, with never a change of any kind. I am of your opinion — favorable to married life — and, as we hold the same ideas, why would it not be agreeable for us to unite our fortunes?”

“My dear madam,” gasped the amazed Valera, “consider that we are, as yet, only strangers, not even acquaintances.”

“I care not a fig for such things,” said Terp. “You are a man; I am a woman. You are in search of a wife; I am in search of a husband. You say you admire me and my genius; I admire you for your candor and honesty. The mere fact that we are strangers is no bar to matrimony. I think a preponderance of the evidence will show that nine-tenths of the happy and fortunate marriages are those where the parties thereto were suddenly smitten. Therefore, as the author of a great social reform, I claim the right to ask your hand in wedlock.”

“But, my dear madam, it is so sudden, so unexpected!”

“It should be all the more sweet and acceptable, because it is sudden and unexpected. I observe that you are too retiring and modest to secure a wife, and the best part of your life has been wasted in vain regrets and longings after the desirable, and, what has been to you, the unattainable. You would die a bachelor if not solicited to die otherwise.

I come to your relief. All that is necessary for you to know is that I am of good character; all that I require of you is a certificate of good moral character, signed up by reputable persons."

"But, my dear lady," said Valera, "you will certainly give me time to reflect; time to consult my friends?"

"If you were buying a horse or a shotgun, would you deem it necessary to consult friends and ask their advice about a matter in which you were thoroughly competent to act for yourself? Remember that it is strictly a matter of business."

"Of course it is simply a matter of business, but I have made it a rule not even to buy a shotgun without asking the advice of friends; I must have time for reflection."

"How long will it require for you to decide whether you do, or do not, want a wife?"

"Give me five years," said Juan Valera.

"Sir!" said Terp, hotly; "you trifle with me."

"Nay, not so; give me, then, one year?"

"Not a year, nor a month, nor a week; this day you must decide," said Terp, authoritatively.

"Very well," said Valera, quietly. "You shall have an answer at two o'clock this afternoon, if you choose to come here for it."

"I will be here at that hour," said Terp, briefly.

"If I choose to decide adversely, then we can still be friends; I would be a brother to you."

"No, sir; if you decide adversely, I shall have nothing more to do with you; it is strictly a matter of business, and I should forget you immediately."

He would have pressed her to his bosom, but she declined disdainfully. It was a matter of business, and she would not have it marred by sentiment. Thus she made it appear, but, in reality, her emotions were a fluttermill in active service. In fact, she wanted to embrace the man, and to be embraced

by the man, but experience had taught her not to precipitate matters, and not to build for herself air castles that were liable to be shattered in a moment's time. She could no longer say, with the pretty milkmaid, "My face is my fortune, sir," for her face was becoming pinched and wrinkled, and required constant attention to keep it in presentable condition.

"I am reminded," said Valera, "that I came here for another purpose; have heard of the return of Miss Frossie Graydon, and came here to see her and your father. I very much desire to meet them; perhaps I may be of service here."

"You will receive a cordial welcome from my family, I am sure. My father is away from home this morning, but will be here this afternoon. I understand that Frossie has completely recovered from her prostration, and will be down stairs with the family to-day."

"Very well; nothing would suit me better than to meet your entire family when I call again. Meet me here, then, at two o'clock, after which you may introduce me to them." And before Terp was aware of it he was ambling off in the general direction of town.

Frossie Graydon regained consciousness and opened her eyes upon what seemed a new world; it seemed to her that she had been dreaming a long, terrible dream, and that its hideousness could never be forgotten. Her mother stood beside her, gazing earnestly upon her.

"What am I doing here, mother? I do not understand it," she said.

"The Lord doth watch thee, my daughter. He is with thee, and thou art safe at home."

"Yes, my dear mother, but why am I in this dark room, and in bed? There is something wrong. Oh, yes; it was storming so when we left the bridge; surely something must have happened."

“Yes, my darling, something did happen, but that was a long time ago.”

“Is my wedding dress finished yet?” said Frossie, absently.

“Yes, daughter, thy wedding dress is finished, but dost remember nothing of the past years? My poor lamb, thou hast been from the fold. Where hast thou been?”

“Have I not been at home, my sweet mother? Oh, something terrible has happened, and I can not recall it, I can not recall it. I only recollect the storm on the bridge, and something comes to me—some horrible recollection haunts me, and yet I can not recall it—it slips away—comes again—and slips away. Perhaps it is only the dim shadows of an ugly dream.” And she closed her eyes wearily.

Minerva Graydon bowed her head and wept bitterly. Was it possible that they were to remain in the dark in regard to their daughter's whereabouts during the past five years? But she realized that the time for weeping was now past, and that thanksgiving and praise were more appropriate, for was not the lost found, and the dead restored to life? Perhaps it was because she was conscious that her daughter had suffered some terrible misfortune; that her mental faculties had been, for a time, completely paralyzed, that made her weep, and the sudden shock of this discovery was certainly enough to cause a temporary weakness on her part. Thalia and Aggie were grieved to learn the apparent truth—that their sister had been a maniac during the years of her absence. But where had she been, and how had she been treated? Questions soon to be answered.

Frossie's prostration was of short duration, and with the return of reason, she was possessed with a strong desire to view again the scenes of other days—or, what seemed to her, the scenes of yesterday. So, on the afternoon of the day mentioned, she found herself with her family seated in the reception room, looking much the same as in other days;

perhaps her countenance was a trifle mournful, yet it was Frossie, bright, blooming, bewitching, bewildering Frossie, restored to reason and to the loving arms of her friends.

Juan Valera and Terp met in the wigwam according to agreement, and the contract was completed. She was his, and he was hers, and the compact had been sealed with a kiss. The engagement was to be a secret, however, and you may well imagine Terp's embarrassment—being engaged, and in possession of a secret at the same time; it was, to her, a most trying ordeal. Together the couple wended their way to the house, Valera being quite anxious to meet the family. They entered the room where the group was seated, engaged in pleasant conversation. Valera was formally introduced, and Frossie stood gazing at him in astonishment. In some way she felt sure he was connected with her past life, but how?

"*Le petite Aimee*," Valera cried, joyfully; and to the surprise of the company, he clasped her to his bosom, and imprinted a burning kiss upon her willing lips.

"Sir! Mr. Valera," cried the horrified spinster. "I do not understand such conduct! Explain yourself!"

"Yes, sir! explain yourself," said Germain, who was seated by Frossie's side. "That lady is to be my wife, sir; yes, sir; and I demand an explanation, sir, of such conduct."

You see, at once, that Juan Valera had two nervous individuals very jealous, and an immediate explanation seemed the proper thing. As the reader is, doubtless, anxious to have certain points cleared up, I will allow him to proceed without further elaboration.

CHAPTER XXII.

KNOTS UNTIED.

“Friends,” smilingly said Juan Valera, “you are certainly entitled to an explanation of what may seem to you very singular conduct on my part. I am just now solving what has been to me a problem, for the past five years; I am just now in possession of the key to what has been to me a very great mystery, or, rather, a great mistake. During the past five years I have been the self-appointed guardian and benefactor of the one who has been so happily restored to reason and to the arms of her friends. During this time, or a greater part of the five years, I labored under the belief that she had no friends, but was an unfortunate actress, without home or kindred. I learned to love her (here Terp became restless, and glared at him savagely,) as tenderly as if she were my own sister, and did not know, until my arrival in this place, that her name was Graydon, nor that she had a friend upon earth, except myself. You may well imagine my feelings, after having followed her for so many weary miles, to find that she had a home and a family, and that I, all these years, had been mistaken as to her identity. I am not acquainted with the history of her misfortunes, except since the time she has been in my care.”

He was informed that the family were almost wholly in the dark in regard to Frossie's adventures, and was requested to tell what he knew about her. Being thus invited, he related what the reader already knows. Very graphically he described the terrible affair in the Kentucky wood, which was his introduction to Frossie; very minutely he told of the tender care of the rude cabin folk; the fortunate circumstance of finding a skilled physician in such an out-of-the-way place; the providential steamer, with its good priest and Sisters of

Mercy; the watchful care of the nuns; and the scientific treatment and excellent care of M. Guzoit and wife, in their lovely private asylum; of the circumstances and evidence that caused him to conclude that she was an actress, without friends.

“I was strangely infatuated with my beautiful charge,” said Valera, “for reasons which I only partially understood. Some things are now clear, which were then veiled in mystery. I worked at my trade—being a printer. The expenses of keeping my charge at the private asylum were somewhat vast, when you take into consideration that I was compelled to earn the money by hard work. I was able to meet my bills promptly until sickness came. For a long time I was sick with fever, and afterwards annoyed by rheumatism. I was reduced to the point of starvation, because of my inability to work, and because I was forced to practice the most rigid economy and self-denial, in order to pay M. Guzoit’s bills. But in various ways I managed to pull through and regain my usual health, after which I soon made up for lost time. If there is anything that I feel at liberty to be vain about, it is the fact that I was enabled to keep Frossie under the tender care of the French physician and his wife, and provide her with such a lovely home, during her days of misfortune. During her stay there she had many violent attacks, and was, at times, almost unmanageable, but usually, and especially during the last six months, she was allowed much freedom around the house. During that time, in all suitable weather, it was a favorite pastime, or, rather, a custom of hers, to stroll through the beautiful gardens around the asylum. She never seemed to care for flowers, nor did she appear to take notice of anything or anybody, and yet her desire to walk in the open air each day was regarded as an indication of returning reason, and a step towards permanent recovery, for M. Guzoit held that if Frossie should ever regain the use of her mental faculties, her cure would be per-

manent and sure. It was deemed necessary at all times to keep a strict watch upon her movements, and, during her walks, she was always followed by an attendant. One day, recently, she escaped from her attendant, as they were walking through the premises; a long chase ensued, and I was immediately informed of the matter. We found her at a railroad depot, very coolly awaiting the departure of a train. A sudden fancy seized me; why not allow her to depart and follow her? I could control and bring her back at will, and, perhaps, the trip would do her great good. It was only a fancy of mine, but M. Guzoit allowed me to use my own pleasure in the matter. She boarded a train, and I followed immediately, posting the conductor and guaranteeing that she should give him no trouble. She was not aware of my presence, and sat for hours as if in a stupor. She left the train when we reached the city of —, and, entering the dining-room of the hotel, or restaurant, belonging to the depot, partook of a sumptuous repast, all the time apparently oblivious to her surroundings, and departed without paying her bill; but I paid it as hastily as possible, and followed her. She boarded another train; I followed, paid her fare, as I had done before, and gave the conductor all necessary advice. But she was extremely quiet and nothing happened worthy of note during the tremendously long ride that followed. I was anxious to see if traveling would have any good effect upon her, and did nothing to attract her attention; and I doubt if she would have paid any attention to me, or have recognized me from among the other passengers, had I seated myself at her side, so entirely oblivious did she seem.

“We arrived at the depot in this place, and as I had, in other days, been familiar with the country and with the town people, I stepped upon the platform for a moment to see if I could see any of the old-time faces and objects. When the train started I returned to my post of duty, but, to my surprise, found that Frossie had disappeared. A brakeman

had noticed her jump off the train on the opposite side from the depot, and disappear in the darkness. I had the train stopped, for it was in rapid motion; and though I searched, and made inquiry, I could find no trace of her. Being thoroughly aroused, my search was diligent. One fellow claimed to have seen a woman answering to my description going south, on the National pike; I procured a horse and followed the woman, but found her to be only a country woman returning home. On my return to town, I found the place in a state of excitement. It was said that the long-lost daughter of Nathaniel Graydon, mourned as dead for many years, had returned home, and that she was supposed to be a lunatic. You may be sure that I was not long in learning the exact truth, for a suspicion flashed into my mind, and kept growing stronger all the time, that Nathaniel Graydon's daughter and my charge were one and the same person. With many others I visited your house, saw Frossie lying on a lounge, with your physician present, and, deeming it advisable not to intrude, withdrew, without attracting attention or comment. I learned afterward that she was suffering from prostration, and believing my absence would be of more benefit than my presence, remained at my hotel. You can imagine my feelings when I was told that her reason had been so miraculously restored. To know that one I had so tenderly and patiently cared for, was again herself, made me very happy. It was, however, but a fulfillment of M. Guzoit's recent prophecy; he claimed that it was extremely probable that she would regain her mental strength, and that her intellectual powers would be as strong, or stronger, than they were prior to the time she had received the terrible gunshot wound which caused her insanity. I congratulate you, my *Le petite* sweetheart, upon your permanent recovery, and prophesy that your misfortunes are at an end, and that life holds for you its sweetest incense."

At the conclusion of Valera's lengthy story, Frossie threw

her arms around him, and gave him a tremendous hugging and kissing, much to the disgust of two nervous individuals whose jealous fears made them quite unhappy and unreasonable for the time being. All had listened attentively to Valera, and he was interrupted by many an exclamation of surprise and half-suppressed sobs. Frossie was more surprised than any one present, and as he progressed with the story, she fancied she could dimly remember a portion of it; yet, upon reflection, she was certain that she could not positively remember a single thing narrated by Valera. It was all like a horrible dream that had passed beyond recall. She did remember all that had happened on the night of her disappearance, to the time of the firing of the pistol, and told the same story as told by Satalia in his letter of confession, adding that she had never suspicioned Paul Satalia of improper motives until that evening, and was at first greatly surprised at his words and conduct on the bridge, then angry, and finally horrified. She was bewildered by the violence of the storm and the panic of the crowd, and was frightened almost to death when she found she had made the mistake of fleeing to the Kentucky side of the river, and was in the power of the unscrupulous villain.

“It is rather singular,” said Valera, “that you did not find a clue to her whereabouts, when she was so near the place of her disappearance for many hours.”

“Well,” said Nathaniel, casting a contemptuous glance at Terp, “you see the police and everybody in search of a clue, were rambling around over the country after a cab and two white horses. It’s quite a disadvantage to have a fool in the family, and —”

But Minerva spoke to him quietly, and he subsided.

Some things connected with the affair were never explained, but they were not material facts, and consequently of little value in the chain of evidence required to make this story complete. For instance, why the articles of clothing were

scattered around in different places was never certainly known ; but the theory of the police force, that these articles were so scattered to throw pursuers off the trail, was probably correct. The identity of the body taken from the Ohio River, and interred with so much pomp and ceremony, was never established, nor satisfactorily explained. Probably it was the remains of "One more unfortunate," who had been thrown from the suspension bridge, or from a boat, by some murderous villain. This theory is probably correct, as the body was in a nude condition, and bore marks of violence. Yet it may have been some half-crazed girl who had, in a state of frenzy, escaped from home in the dark hours of night, and to escape from shame and mental torture, leaped from the bridge :

" Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world."

It was a case of mistaken identity, which proved satisfactory to all concerned. Amelia Burgoyne, the actress mentioned, was subsequently found in a variety theater in the city of Brooklyn, New York, and was probably a heartless, giddy creature, whose vain ambition allowed her to forsake her old mother, and elope with an actor, who promised her fame and fortune, and gave her nothing.

Thalia and Aggie and Minerva fell in love with the handsome, chivalrous stranger, and Frossie felt she had another idol besides her papa and the jealous young man at her side, who was gnashing his teeth with ill-concealed rage, to think that the handsome man should have an opportunity to befriend Frossie, and fall in love with her, and no one there to prevent. Of course he was too old for Frossie ; but girls sometimes do foolish things, and who knows ? etc., etc.

Nathaniel eyed the stranger curiously during the recital of

the narrative; and something in Valera's manner of expression and general conduct seemed familiar; he fancied that it must be some former friend, and he was correct, although the date of their acquaintance was away back in the frosty past. But something of greater importance than mere recollection aided Nathaniel, as we shall see.

"You said awhile ago, I believe," said he, "that this vicinity was familiar to you, and as I become better acquainted with you, am almost certain that I have known you some time in the past. Perhaps it is only fancy, but something about you, your actions it may be, seem familiar. I am not good at remembering names, but faces never slip entirely away from me. I do not recollect your name, but we have met; is it not true?"

"You are not mistaken," said Juan Valera, with bitter emphasis. "When I was a mere lad, every inch of ground in this neighborhood was familiar; but that was before the evil days came upon me."

"You speak mournfully, sir!" said warm-hearted Thalia, "but as if this place held blissful memories. Will you not take us into your confidence, and accept our sympathies? We must always regard you as the author of our future happiness: for was it not your heroism, and patience, and protection that saved our darling and brought her safe home?"

"I hardly know whether I am entitled to so much gratitude or not," said Valera. "I endeavored to do my duty; but must have been impelled by that invisible Power and Presence which sometimes directs the feet of men into paths of duty and holiness, when the flesh itself is weak and rebellious."

"He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. Thou wert directed by the Spirit of the living Lord to save the perishing one. God sent thee as His messenger, His ministering angel, and raised thee up in the depths of the Kentucky forest to do His will. He is mighty to save, and

works through human instrumentalities." These words, spoken so earnestly by Minerva, caused Valera to bow respectfully to the gentle woman, whom he was learning to admire.

"Sir," said Germain, with frosty politeness; "there is no one here who ought to be more grateful than myself; for you have returned to my arms and my heart the only being that I ever loved, and the one who is to be my wife."

Doubtless Germain thought he was igniting a train of powder, for he looked as if he expected an immediate explosion; but Valera was coolly and calmly indifferent to the remarks of the jealous lover, and Terp was again hopeful, for, she reasoned, if her intended was in love with Frossie he would certainly manifest some annoyance at Germain's bold declaration.

"By my soul," cried the impetuous O'Leeds, "this is the most remarkable series of adventure that ever came under my observation; it beats the most extravagant story told in any novel I have read; and I have been trying to persuade my dear sister Aggie to write it up and publish it in book form. You have my unbounded gratitude for the service you have rendered us."

Juan Valera smiled at O'Leeds' enthusiasm, and was about to speak again, when Frossie swept across the room and grasped his hand. He arose to his feet, and the bewilderingly beautiful face, with its tearful eyes, was beaming full upon him.

"If my friends have cause to feel grateful to you, I have much more reason to bless you. To you I owe my friends, my reason, and life itself. Oh, how can I repay you?"

Now, Germain thought this would be just the opportunity for Valera to say, in the language of the book, "Fair lady, I ask but your heart and hand in return. I have loved you through all these years of sacrifice." But that gentleman used no such language; and after a short conversation with his former charge, said, addressing the old gentleman:

“ Yes, it was years ago, in my childhood days, that I lived here and had a home. It was the happiest period of my life—the only spot in life’s tempestuous and winding way that has been entirely satisfactory. I was a wild, passionate boy, full of life, and enjoying boyish sports with a whirlwind of enthusiasm. I could ride the wildest colt, outrun the fleetest footed companion, out-swim the other boys, and in athletic and acrobatic feats was far superior to any of my boy friends. In fact, I was a lively youth, and my highest ambition was to excel in out-door sports. As the years went by, I acquired bad habits, and was not as particular about the *quality* as I was about the *quantity* of my associates. I was a favorite with lads of good, as well as bad repute; my friends were numerous, and willing to view, with some degree of allowance, the harmless pranks of a lively boy; but my father was inclined to be severe, and, I thought in those days, tyrannical. The most trivial happenings of my every-day life were, sometimes, magnified by him into grave offenses; and I was severely punished for misdemeanors which existed only in his imagination. Notwithstanding his quick temper, hasty judgment, and imperative ways, my father was a kind-hearted man, and was very good to me at times. My mother was irritable, and entirely incompetent to control my headstrong disposition. She neither had the ability nor the inclination to shape my character for good, and, in consequence, my character shaped itself. I do not think I had an evil disposition, and never intentionally harmed any one; but having made friends with some lads of bad character, and abandoning my former good associations, my own reputation became a target for suspicion. Evil communications, it is said, corrupt good manners, and it was even so in my case, for my course was from thence downward, and myself and a few companions were arrested, charged with a serious crime. I was innocent, but the evidence was against me; it was, however, circumstantial evidence, but I was sure it would lead to con-

viction. I was admitted to bail, which I concluded to forfeit and slip out into the big world that looked so enticing to me; and left home believing that my father, as my bondsman, would be compelled to pay a large sum of money on my account, but consoled myself with the thought that he would rather pay out any amount of money than have me convicted of a crime of which I was not guilty —”

“Hold!” cried Nathaniel Graydon, excitedly. “Your name is not familiar, but you are telling a story that is painfully familiar. Valera, who are you?”

“Who am I?” he said with terrible emphasis. “Who am I—I am—yes, I am—your son—Hamlet Graydon!”

If some one had thrown a bomb-shell through the window, and said shell had burst in the midst of that quiet and highly respectable group, I do not think the results would have been more terrific.

“And you claim to be my brother?” cried Terp, all ablaze.

“Yes, Terpsichore, I am your long lost brother,” and, turning to her, would have embraced her, but she would not.

“Villain! beast! brute! I hate you!” cried the disappointed spinster, flouncing out of the room majestically, much to the surprise of the company, who could not understand such language, even from Terp. Hamlet wisely kept his own counsel, seeing that he had carried his joke a little too far; but he knew that his eccentric sister’s affections were not involved, and that she was not damaged to any great extent. The matter was never alluded to by any of the family, and Terp was spared the humiliation that would have followed an exposure of her exploit of having tried to “equalize the chances” with her own, dear, long-absent brother.

The estrangement between father and son had always been a thorn in Minerva Graydon’s pillow, and her joy knew no bounds in thus beholding her husband’s son coming to them under circumstances that would be sure to unite them

in indissoluble bonds. The sisters had never met their "half brother," and his name having been mentioned but little, they were, by reason of their father's displeasure and commands, obliged to content themselves with a very limited knowledge of the missing link in the family chain. Now that he was here, and they found him to be a generous, self-sacrificing, whole-souled and gentlemanly fellow, was it not a proper thing for Aggie to shake him warmly by the hand, for Thalia to kiss him, and for Frossie — under the circumstances, mind you, — to embrace him, again and again? And was it not a proper time for Germain to cease gnashing his teeth in jealous rage, and shake hands with his "skeleton at the feast," and assure him, with a radiant and happy countenance, of his everlasting friendship? And was it not an opportunity for O'Leeds to splutter, air his magnificent courtesy, kiss his wife, bring in the juvenile Weilers and O'Leeds, introduce them to the new found fractional brother-in-law, and tell him how smart they were, for such *small* children? All these things came to pass, and were multiplied a great many times. Hamlet was sated with saccharine matter, and was willing to abandon the "role" of Enoch Arden and become an humble citizen of the Republic at once. But he appreciated the generous welcome given by his family, and was moved to tears by the fervency of their avowals of gratitude and love. And one who had suffered from the stings of detraction; felt the force of unrequited toil, warred with the world for bread; who had been slandered and maligned and abused; who had been ruined by the freaks of outrageous fortune, and who was weary and sick of the world, had found a shelter and rest at home.

Nathaniel Graydon had something to say, and he said it:

"What a wonderful thing is this life we live. There is no stop, nor stay, in the tide of events. Change and chance make and unmake the fabric of our bliss. There is nothing so cruel as destiny; nothing so fleeting as friendship; nothing

so delusive as hope ; nothing so uncertain as happiness. To-day we feel secure ; to-morrow we may gaze upon a different map, and the geography of the future may seem foreboding and cheerless. To-day our lives may seem hopelessly dreary and dark ; in a moment all may be changed to life and light. Five years ago the darkest and most wretched days of my life came upon me ; I lost desire for life, and spent my time in railing against my hard fate. I never expected to be happy again ; but lo, in a single moment everything is changed, and all the old time duties and pleasures are in bloom."

"And Richard is himself again," said Tiberius.

Nathaniel bowed and continued : "The return of my son was the one thing necessary to make my cup full to overflowing. I see it all now, but a week ago I would have been angry at the mention of his name. He has returned, and I welcome him home to my hospitalities, to my hearth-stone, and to my heart again. Through all these long years of estrangement I have been to blame. Yes, I've been to blame. I ask your pardon, my son, for my cruelty and neglect ; and may God forgive me for what I have done."

Hamlet Graydon was overjoyed to regain a place in his father's affections, and the two men actually embraced.

"My noble father, we will never again be separated ; the ties that now bind us can not be broken. This is the happiest day of my life, for I have suffered terribly, because of my unreasonable and foolish resolve never to return home, and never to ask forgiveness for the wrong I have done. When I left home, as you are aware, I was nothing but a mere boy. After my departure I received many letters from you, my father, for I did not, for a long time, make a secret of my whereabouts to you. Your letters were violent and abusive, if you remember, and probably I merited such, but did not think so at the time. Finally I adopted the policy of returning your letters unopened, and, with the regularity of clock-work, I returned them."

“Oh, my son!” said Nathaniel, “if you had but opened my last letters, I am sure you would have changed your mind. For, after your innocence had been established, and your name cleared of even a suspicion of guilt, and the crime for which you were arrested had been fastened upon other persons, my feelings toward you were completely changed. I loved you then as I do now, and wanted you to return home. But you did not open my letters, and when you wrote me that note telling me not to waste my precious time writing to you, and declaring that you would never darken my doors again, I was so enraged that I vowed never to receive you as a son again, and that we should from that time be strangers, and we have been all these years apart without any sensible reason why.”

“Yes, my father, we have been separated without sufficient reason; our blind passions made us forget our first and most sacred duties and obligations toward each other. I would that it had been otherwise, for I have suffered terribly, and my whole life has been a failure. No, I will not say that, for there are redeeming features in every man’s life. I have roamed all over the world, and mingled with all kinds of people, rich and poor, good, bad, and indifferent. I have associated with the refined and intellectual, and with the depraved and the ignorant; the whole world has been my home, and a very undesirable home it has been at times. My life has been void of all permanent joy, and divorced from all the real comforts of home. I became dissolute and dissipated, and drifted around about the same as a tramp, or a vagabond, working at my trade from place to place, and earning enough money to satisfy my appetite for drink and food; but I never begged, nor accepted charity in any shape; was always strictly honest, and, I believe, generous to a fault. But, oh! the long days and nights of wandering and drifting without a purpose or an aim; they rise up against me as I talk, and, like Banquo’s ghost, they will not down.

The sins of my youth and the folly of manhood cannot be blotted out, however much I desire it; they are the crimson stains of my character, and I cannot wash them white. The failures of a misspent life have mocked my every effort at reformation, and I wrestle with them as a strong man with a giant. Five years ago, when Frossie became my charge, I resolved to lead a new life; to make an honest effort to become respectable, and to so live that I should have an influence for good among my fellows. I need not tell you that my struggle with old habits was long and bitter, but I conquered my evil desires and appetites, and habits of industry came again to strengthen my new-born desires for a higher life. I believe that my reformation is complete and permanent, and the balance of my days will be devoted to useful pursuits of happiness. During the rebellion I served as a private soldier, and am proud of my army record. I did my duties faithfully and well, so my superiors said. Whether parched by the summer's sun, or numbed by the frosts of winter, I was always ready and willing to do my duty, in camp or in the field. I was obedient to my superiors, and never flinched before the guns of the enemy; was wounded four times, and left a leg at Stone River."

"You are, indeed, my son," said Nathaniel, joyfully; "for if you have been a good soldier; then you will be a good citizen. You are a thoroughbred Graydon, although I once imagined that you were a Driver, and (confidentially, aside,) damn the Drivers."

I think there was no one present so happy as Minerva Graydon. The restoration of her daughter, the acquisition of a step-son, whom she already admired for his manly bearing, were blessings for which she could not be thankful enough, and she had something to say:

"You know the Psalmist says, 'He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust,' and there I have found refuge during the dark hours now gone forever.

Yes, I have been covered with the feathers of His love, and under the shadow of His beautiful wings I have found safety and rest; and there forever let me abide. Under the wings of my God, close folded and secure, hiding from danger and harm. Wings of healing, shadow of mercy and peace, under thee I will love, and trust, and hope, and prepare for heaven, and die. There is no safety nor abiding peace, except in the presence of God. He has been with me all the time, and, though my heart was bruised and bleeding, I found, in Him, strength to bear it all. Of what avail is any religion if it does not bring strength in the hour of need? Of what avail is my faith in Christ if it be not sufficient in every time of trouble? There is no grief too great to bear if we are under the beautiful Shadow. There is no gulf of despair too deep for God to fathom and find His children. If we sleep in the hollow of His hand nothing shall harm us or make us afraid. There is no sorrow that God can not turn to joy. There is no misfortune so dark and terrible that the glory of His presence can not illumine and drive away. I have walked hand-in-hand with my Saviour, and He always leads me into bright and shining ways. He has taken away the heart-aches and the tears and the suffering. Praise His holy name, we may walk in His presence and not faint; we may lay our heads upon the bosom of that mighty love and rest secure."

Each one had something to say, and the time passed pleasantly. Hamlet was firmly installed in the affections of his family, and in a home that was to be a place of delight and comfort to him during the remainder of his life.

That same day Nathaniel sought his "Book of the House of Graydon," determined to adjust Hamlet's record; and he did so to his own satisfaction. With a rubber eraser he erased all the pencil marks and the cross that had been scrawled across the meager biography, and a very lengthy and generous sketch of the son's life was recorded. Having satisfied himself that he had done ample justice to his son's name, he

searched in his wonderful book for a precedent to fit Hamlet's case. He found nothing to match, and nothing very similar. The nearest was the mournful tale of Duncan Graydon, away back along the line of his ancestors :

“Duncan Graydon, eldest son of John and Sarah Graydon, was born —, and died —. At the age of fifteen, he was arrested for stealing a cow from a poor widow. The matter was hushed up, and young Duncan fled for parts unknown. In the war of 1812 he was terribly wounded a great many times; and his right leg and left arm were blown off by cannon balls, two of which struck him at the same moment. In a saloou fight he had an ear chewed off and an eye gouged out, and lost his remaining arm in a bear trap; afterwards, his remaining foot was so badly frozen that amputation was necessary. Feeling the need of home influences, he sent for his father to come to his aid. But while his father was on the road, a shot-gun, in the hands of a friend, prematurely exploded, taking effect in Duncan's abdomen. His father reached him while he was yet alive, and Duncan asked him for a chew of tobacco. His father placed the plug to his lips, and he eagerly bit off a large chew, which he rolled around in his mouth for a few moments, and expired.

“LATER.—The above is partially erroneous, and by some considered altogether untrue.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BRIDAL TOUR.

Sentimental persons do a great many foolish things, and some things which are not so foolish. Persons of fine fiber and strong spirituality are prone to keep in remembrance, things that are sacred by reason of sorrow; and Frossie's wedding garments, during her absence, were objects almost of worship, inasmuch as they were a perpetual and vivid reminder of the last happy hours spent together by the sisters. These garments had been manufactured according to contract, and expressed to the Graydons, with the garments

ordered by Thalia and Aggie. When she learned of what priceless value they had been to the sisters, and with what jealous care they had been guarded, Frossie decided to use the wedding dress purchased five years ago, for the wedding that failed to be, by reason of the absence of the bride. What difference did it make if they were not of the latest style? They were stylish enough, and had been sanctified by the tears of her dear sisters, and that was of more consequence than style, or the opinions of people who care for style. With some changes the costly apparel was adjusted to suit the graceful figure for which it was originally intended. She had grown a trifle stouter and taller, but the red-headed seamstress, who had cultivated her courage up to a point where she could hold her false teeth in her mouth when Frossie was near, although they would chatter a little, was equal to the demands of the matter, and the changes were made very neatly.

Germain's reformation was as sudden and emphatically certain as had been his downfall. He had been as one without a purpose or a hope, living only to satisfy appetite and passion. Now that he had been restored to light and life, and had a hope and a purpose—in female attire—he was himself again. The ravages of dissipation soon disappeared from his countenance, and he became the same athletic, handsome, and noble looking fellow that he had been in days of old. The gossips of the neighborhood were morally certain that he would return to his old ways after marriage, but, as usual, they were mistaken.

Some persons are moderately and sensibly happy on the day of their wedding; others are absurdly and absent-mindedly blissful on such occasions. As for Germain, I think he was the very happiest mortal in all the world when he clasped his lovely bride to his honest bosom, and, for the first time, called her wife, and vowed to shelter and protect, and love, and caress, in sickness and in health, through evil and good

report, to the end of life. I say I think he was the happiest mortal in all the world at that moment, and he should have been, for Frossie was certainly the happiest woman, and told Thalia so. Thalia laughingly replied that all new brides were happy, and had a right to be so, for wedded life was a happy state of existence, doubtless thinking about her dear Tiberius, herself and children, when she mentioned the bliss of married life, for she had been very happy, and her bliss had been marred only by sad recollections and the loss of her beloved sister.

The sensible twain decided not to make an expensive and extensive wedding tour, but to be content with a visit to the scenes of Frossie's strange adventures. She was anxious to become acquainted with the Conway family, of whom she had no recollection, but whose tender mercies had been glowingly depicted and recited by Hamlet; and she longed to revisit the prison home, where, for so long a time, she was held captive by reason of her darkened intellect. The good Sisters, who took her in, and Dr. Lemoine, were also on her list of benefactors. As she pondered over her miraculous restoration to reason and to friends, her gratitude increased, and, as she thought of the magnanimous self-sacrifices of Hamlet in her behalf, it is no wonder that he became in her eyes the embodiment of perfect manhood; and he *was* a noble fellow, notwithstanding his former waywardness.

It was a day in September when the bridal party was ready for departure. The members of this highly respectable group were Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Chadsworth Graydon, Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Germain, Mr. and Mrs. Tiberius O'Leeds and children, Mrs. Aggie Graydon Weiler and children, Miss Terpsichore Graydon, Mr. Hamlet Graydon, and dear old Aunt Mehitable, who has been dropped from this story on account of a severe cold she contracted while doing missionary work in one of the heaven-deserted wards of her city. The red-headed seamstress wanted to take the trip, but was afraid to risk herself on board the same boat with

Miss Terp Graydon. Nathaniel Graydon never looked so hale and so emphatically happy in his life; the vigor of youth had, seemingly, returned, and he looked as if he viewed the entire globe from a military standpoint. To Minerva the breezes were singing Psalms, and she was very happy. O'Leeds was polished up until he was as beaming as in days of old, when he was considered a most charming society man. Thalia was exceedingly joyous, and kissed her mother frequently, which was her way of letting off the rapidly accumulating vapors of bliss. Mother's kiss was always an available safety-valve to her soul. Aggie was most bewitchingly attired, and it seemed that her youthful beauty had not only been retained, but greatly improved. You may be certain that she was not a neglected flower, nor one of those undesirable calamities so often found in widow's weeds; no indeed! It was whispered that she was engaged to a promising young physician, and the rumor was correct. Terp was starched and braced up with great severity, and she viewed the stern aspect of her future affairs with that philosophical indifference for which she was noted, not even allowing her associates to know that she was suffering the pangs of keen disappointment; and, notwithstanding her long-lost brother had made overtures at reconciliation, she treated him with cold contempt. Hamlet was a most companionable fellow, in his way, and had made himself agreeable to every one, barring Terp. Even the juvenile members of the party were delighted with his joviality and generosity. As to the bride and groom—please excuse me! They were walking on air, climbing to the moon on a ladder made of honeysuckles and jessamine flowers. Therefore, I say, please release me from the task of telling the tale of true love and revealing the secrets of the honeymoon to the vulgar gaze of the public. The thrilling language of love usually indulged in by newly married folk, is entirely too sweet for assimilation by the hard-headed public, and the honeymoon should be a private

affair, not even visible to friends of the family. Frossie probably would not have been so happy had she been in full possession of the facts concerning Paul Satalia's death. She knew that he was dead, but the manner and circumstances connected with his death were withheld from her knowledge, for a long time. She had been exonerated by her friends from all blame in the deplorable affair, and it was thought best to allow her, for the present, to remain in ignorance of the horrible features of his demise.

But, as I was saying, it was a day in September when they found themselves afloat on the broad bosom of the Ohio, going toward the Mississippi, in an elegant steamer which had been chartered especially for the occasion. It was a small vessel, but quite ample for their purposes, and had been fitted up for private use in a most expensive manner. Hamlet thought he could locate the spot where the villains had pulled ashore with the supposed dead body of their victim, but deemed it prudent to go further down the river to the landing where the providential steamer, bearing the heaven-directed priest and Sisters of Mercy had made such a timely arrival. He was somewhat confused by the first appearance of things at the landing; much timber had been cut away in the vicinity, and a few houses had been erected. So great a change had been made that he hardly knew whether he was at the right place or not. Once on shore, however, he found his bearings, and struck the exact trail over which Frossie had been carried on the stretcher to the steamer "Jasmine Bell," and it was proposed to go at once to Conway's humble dwelling. The distance being somewhat lengthy, Aunt Mehitable was left at a cottage near the landing, she preferring to stay there during the day rather than endure the fatigue of the journey. A hand-cart was procured for the purpose of conveying the children, it being the only vehicle in the neighborhood suitable for that purpose, and the children hugely enjoyed their rough and tumble ride through the wood. Very

minutely Hamlet described the journey from the cabin to the steamer, showing the spots where the men stopped to rest, or change their burden to other willing hands.

After a long walk they came in sight of the cabin, a humble cabin, and yet the most sacred structure of the kind in all the world to Frossie and her companions. There had been but little change about the place since the day Hamlet left it with his precious charge. A slab-sided young man was splitting stove-wood near the house. He was angular and awkward, and didn't seem to care if he was, or who knew it. He knew, in a general way, that the discovery of America was conceded to Columbus, that the war was over, and a great many other useful things; but it was obvious that he had not wasted any time in cultivating the smiles and favor of fashionable society. Hamlet recognized him at a glance, although he had grown amazingly tall. It was Beauregard. Very unconcernedly he continued to swing his ax, not being aware of their approach until they were upon him. Becoming conscious of their presence, he ceased chopping, and said, as if talking to himself:

“Well, I'll be dern'd, who be it?”

Hamlet was not long in making himself known, and, after a few moments, the young man remembered him quite well. When he introduced Frossie as the one who was so terribly wounded, and who had been carried from the cabin on a stretcher, Beauregard's eyes widened, and, dropping his ax, he fled to the house without ceremony, and yelled to his mother, who was somewhere in the interior:

“Mother! mother! come quick, an' see the little Dutch gal that ware hyar onct with her head all shot off, an' the same man's with her!”

Almost instantly Jezreel was at the door, hastened to meet the visitors, and, in her quaint, old-fashioned way, gave them a hearty welcome. Zebadee was in the wood, not far away, and, without instructions, Beauregard hastened to in-

form him of the arrivals. The good man came in, much surprised, but, nevertheless, gratified to meet his visitors. Whilst greetings were being exchanged, Beauregard might have been seen stealing around the corner of the house, and entering the barn, with a bundle under his arm, which he had taken from the house. Shortly afterward he emerged, dressed in his best clothes, a suit of blue jeans, with a straw hat upon his head, and a flaming necktie flying from the top of his coat. He had greased his shoes with harness oil, and was now ready to mingle with the crowd. Frossie spoke kindly to him, and won his heart instantly. During the conversation that followed he inadvertently alluded to Frossie as the "little Dutch gal," and Hamlet offered an explanation of what seemed to them rude and boorish.

"You see, Frossie, when you lay here so dangerously sick, you were delirious, and did your weeping and moaning and talking mostly in French, Latin, and other languages, and our good friends have the mistaken idea that you are a foreigner."

The explanation was entirely satisfactory to all concerned, and Frossie declared she did not understand why she should forsake the English language at such a time; although, she was aware she had received a careful training in several languages. "But," said she, "being English, it was quite proper for me to take to French and Latin, after I had my head severely injured; but as long as one's head is clear, English is good enough."

Right here it was proposed to visit the spot where Frossie's grave had been dug; and, after some hesitation, and a few cold shudders, the proposition was accepted; and the party, without further ado, went to the spot where Frossie had almost found an eternal resting-place. The spot was covered with weeds, but the grave had only been partially refilled, and, when the weeds were taken away, there it was, with all its hideous suggestions. Hamlet described his attack

on the villains, their precipitate flight, and his own consternation at being left alone with one so terribly and dangerously wounded. As he indicated with his foot the place where Frossie laid, while the grave was being prepared, that sensitive creature burst into tears, a privilege which she had been denying herself all morning; but her father's strong arm was around her, and he led her gently away from the dreadful spot. At the cabin Zebadee exhibited the pick, shovel, and lantern left by the three villains; and Beauregard produced, from some out-of-the-way place, a large bottle with a tiny American flag (now at half-mast) sticking in the stopper. Hamlet actually flushed, and Beauregard said that he had found the bottle in the woods a short time after the date of the tragic events, and was sure it had belonged to the desperadoes; but it did seem rather singular to him that they should think it necessary to decorate the bottle with a flag. Hamlet purchased this, as a relic, of Beauregard, and afterward had it placed in a glass case, which he kept with religious zeal, for was not this bottle, and the remaining drops of liquor in it, connected with the event which had proved a happy turning point in his career, and restored him to home and friends?

Nathaniel purchased the rocking chair in which Frossie was carried to the cabin, and put old Charley, the faithful horse which had done such good service, on the retired list, and he was to enjoy freedom from hard labor the balance of his days. The Graydons found many ways to express their gratitude, and notwithstanding the fact that Zebadee and the motherly Jezreel were sensitive about receiving pay for their services, yet they did receive many valuable presents; and ever afterwards, at certain seasons of the year, to-wit: on the fourth day of July, and on the twenty-fifth day of December, valuable packages from Nathaniel and family arrive at the cabin, in token of the lasting friendship and gratitude of the Graydons. Jezreel's unaffected piety won Minerva's admiration, and made them fast friends.

The day was spent profitably and pleasantly, and the Conways received a cordial invitation to visit the Graydon place, which they did the following spring. Frossie would have been glad to remain several days with her benefactors, but it was impossible; and, bidding them an affectionate farewell, was soon with the rest of the party on board the steamer bound for Cairo.

At Cairo they learned that Dr. Lemoine was not at New Orleans, but had been touring through Europe for some time, and was still absent. The party continued their journey to St. Louis, via the Mississippi, for the purpose of visiting the ones who had been so kind to Frossie. Father O'Rourke was dead. Peace to his ashes. He was a good man, and I say of him the most generous and praiseworthy thing that can be said of any priest or preacher: he earned his wages. The good Sisters of Mercy were overjoyed to meet Frossie again, and were sure their prayers to the Virgin Mary had been answered, because they had prayed for Frossie's recovery, and was she not restored to reason? It was a plain case to them, and bless their dear souls! let them have their own way. They received a large number of costly presents from the members of the party, and an unlimited amount of heartfelt thanks. They retained the kind words and treasured them in their hearts, but turned the other valuables over to the Catholic Church. Hamlet had written to M. Guzoit and wife, and they were graciously welcomed at the asylum, where they roamed through the ornamental gardens, inspected the interior of the building, and were highly pleased at the scientific methods employed in the establishment, in the treatment of the insane. The Frenchman and his good wife were most affable and polite, and could afford to be, for they had been paid handsomely for their services.

From St. Louis they returned home, with the exception of Germain and his wife, who toured awhile longer, and did not return to their future home until about two weeks

later, after which they assumed the duties and responsibilities of married life with becoming grace and zeal, each determined to make home pleasant and happy. Frossie's passionate love for music returned, and she became noted, in a limited section of the country, on account of her rare musical talents; and I think she would have become famous had she not formed a matrimonial alliance. Mixing music with the cold facts of married life is like trying to mix sand and sugar. The sugar will still be sweet, but much injured by the contact.

The House of Graydon had been restored to more than its pristine glory and influence; old friendships were renewed, and new friends added to the list. Those who had passed hasty and severe judgment upon Frossie, relented and repented, and became her most devoted admirers, seeking in many ways to make atonement for their delinquencies. Injured society has a flannel mouth, and when a transgressor is vindicated its vocal organs are keyed to another tune.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

In September, one year after Frossie's marriage, the family were together one evening for a social chat. I think it was the happiest family circle in the world, or at least in that small fraction of the world with which I am familiar. Nathaniel was holding Frossie Graydon O'Leeds and Frossie Graydon Weiler, two of his beloved grand-children, upon his lap, the happiest grandpa in Christendom—with charity toward all other grandpas and malice toward none. Neither Terp nor Hamlet were present. The latter having purchased the leading county paper, was busily engaged in making it an influential and progressive journal. He was prosperous, and fast becoming a prime factor in his political party. Terp was

still eagerly pursuing the masculine gender, and at that very time was engaged in trying to equalize the chances with the Baptist clergyman, who had recently lost his companion. Subsequently I learned that her efforts were not appreciated. O'Leeds entertained them for a long time in expatiating on the wonderful precocity of the juvenile O'Leeds, and in telling about his wife's capabilities and possibilities as an artist.

Minerva's face was beaming with motherly pride and satisfaction. To be thus happily surrounded, in her mature years, was to her but a fulfillment of the promise of Scripture. The unseen hand of God had led her to the sun-lit heights of domestic bliss, and the Strong Arm had never failed to support and protect her in seasons of weakness and danger.

Aggie no longer wore widow's weeds, for two reasons: She did not think them becoming to her style of beauty, and, furthermore, she was no longer a widow, having wedded the Right Honorable Dr. Barnabas Bobbs, Esq., who, notwithstanding his ugly name, was a gentleman of good repute in society, and high standing in his profession. He was about the proper age for the night-eyed beauty, a trifle older, and possessing that calm, lenient, thoughtful, and forgiving disposition so necessary to the husband of a poet. He was sincerely attached to his charming wife, and her wishes were the laws of his domestic life. As he was fond of poetry, Aggie's endeavors to reach fame *via* the honeysuckle route, were pleasing to him, and his approval made her more ambitious to excel in the art of rhyming. "Haunted," a poem by Mrs. Aggie Graydon Weiler Bobbs, had recently appeared in one of the popular magazines of the day, and Aggie thought she had secured a profitable publisher, but alas! the magazine suspended publication at once; whereupon the vicious Terp said the poem was undoubtedly the cause of its death; but I know that such a statement is false in every particular. On that evening, Dr. Bobbs having been called

away from home on professional business, Aggie deemed it her duty to spend the evening at the Graydon place. She was always welcome there, and was one of the Three Graces whose lives were so linked that they must be together, and live together in the old love, never to be torn rudely apart, nor feel the cruel stings of separation until death shall come in the evening of well-spent lives.

Thalia had been busy all afternoon and evening with her crayons, but now laid them aside to converse with her mother. After a whispered conversation with her, she flitted to Aggie, and the sisters talked in low tones for some time, glancing occasionally at Frossie, who seemed to be aware that she was an object of unusual interest, for she blushed deeply. After awhile Thalia went to her and said something in a jolly but insinuating whisper, which made Frossie's blushes still more apparent. Tripping to her husband she whispered to him, and of course he whispered to her in return. Nathaniel noticed the mysterious manner of his daughters, and said, good humoredly :

"Why am I not worthy of your confidence, Thalia? Surely I am entitled to your secret? If not, you should have some regard for my nerves, for you must know how anxiously eager even an old man like me is to learn secrets which are of too much importance to be spoken aloud."

"Papa," said Frossie, blushing again and again, "do you not wish me to sing for you, or play the new piece of music I received yesterday?"

"This is a conspiracy of some kind," said Nathaniel; "else why should Frossie wish to change the subject so abruptly? What is it, anyway?"

"None are so blind as those who can not see," ventured O'Leeds, and Frossie was angry.

"Thee should observe more closely, Nathaniel," said Minerva. "Ignorance on thy part is hardly excusable, but if thou wilt, it shall be made plain unto thee."

“Worse and worse,” said Nathaniel. “Even my wife cries out against my stupidity, and I have no defense except my stupidity, for how can I fathom the unfathomable, or measure the immeasurable, or see what is not apparent? Explain, my dear Minerva, this mysterious something which is so visible to all except myself.”

“Oh, papa, it is not absolutely necessary that you should know about this secret of ours. It isn’t much of a secret, anyway; just a mere nothing about nothing,” said Frossie, with a scarlet blush.

The entrance of Germain reversed the tide of conversation for a moment, for he had a greeting for each one, and each one had a word for him. It was not the debauched, dissipated Germain, nor the jealous-hearted, melancholy Germain, but clear-eyed, open-handed, impulsively generous Germain, with his eccentricities buried forever. He was a proper companion for his accomplished wife, devotedly attached to his business, and was winning a good name in the commercial world.

“What is it, Frossie?” he said, slyly pinching her ear. “What mean the vermilion hues of your countenance? What a tell-tale thing is a blush; it is an evidence of guilt, and reveals, sometimes, what we would conceal. Confess your sins, and we will forgive you right away.”

“It’s a matter in which you are interested yourself,” blurted O’Leeds to Germain, after an awkward silence.

“Oh, yes; I understand,” said Germain, feigning surprise. “It’s all about the ——”

“Dear Rudolph,” said Frossie, “will you please hand me that spool of silk twist from my work basket, over there in the corner?”

“To be sure—here it is. As I was saying, you must have been twitting Frossie about ——”

“Rudolph!” cried Frossie; “please bring me a glass of water. I am quite thirsty from some cause.”

And Germain vanished in a twinkling, as all good husbands should, when requested so to do by their better fractions.

“Sister,” said pensive Mrs. Bobbs, “I am sure you have nothing of which to be ashamed. It should be a matter of great rejoicing to you, for it is the most sacred duty of womanhood to ——”

“Dear Aggie,” said Frossie, in tones of distress, “please recite your last poem, the one in dialect. You call it, ‘When the maize is in the bar’l, an’ the likker is on tap.’ I’m sure it’s a good one; let’s have it.”

“Oh, no, sister,” said Aggie, “dialect is cold weather goods, entirely too waxy for warm weather.”

Germain returned with a pitcher of ice-water, but all declined the beverage save Frossie, and I do not think she was thirsty.

“As I was saying,” he said —

“My dear Rudolph, will you please return the pitcher to its proper place? we will need it no more, at present.”

And Germain retired, as a good husband should retire, at the bidding of his wife.

Thalia smiled at the display of her sister’s wonderful ability in buffeting and baffling the current of small talk.

“Dear sister,” she said, “your ingenuity is worthy of a reasonable cause, but you should certainly feel no timidity in this matter. I suppose, however, that all women are alike, I remember very well when I ——”

“My own Thalia,” said Frossie, the scarlet roses again in full bloom, “it seems that you are all determined to expose me to my dear father, whose perceptive faculties are at fault; but really I would prefer to change the conversation to something more agreeable and proper. I am sure that this matter is not a proper subject for discussion. Let’s talk about that five hundred dollar landscape of yours, and quit this disjointed chatter about trifles.”

“Nay, my daughter,” said Nathaniel, softly; “what concerns you is of interest to myself. Be it but a trifle, yet my love for you makes it imperatively necessary that I should know its meaning. Strange that I can not surmise what seems to be so perfectly understood among you all. Speak, my daughter, and open my eyes to the truth.”

Frossie raised her fair head, and, with a look made of all sweet accord, answered and said:

“Dearest Papa, there is nothing I would keep from you. Every thought, every word, every purpose of mine is open for your inspection. I have no higher ambition than to lead a blameless life, and to be always worthy of the love and esteem of my noble parents. I desire, above all things, to so live that those who love me may never have cause to regret having bestowed their affections upon me; that my friends may never cease to regard me with favor, and you, my dear Papa, are, above others, entitled to my confidence; but—but—”

“Go on, my daughter,” said Nathaniel, with the old-time softness and music in his voice.

Frossie had been busy all afternoon with her needle, making some garments, which, as if by inspiration, she caught up and held to her father’s view. It was clothing for an infant; one of the garments was long and white, the other was a skirt made of red flannel.

“In poetical language,” she said, with a sweet smile, “these are but shadows of a coming event.”

It’s time to quit.

THE END.

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